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DEMETRA VAKA

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SOME PAGES FROM THE LIFE OF TURKISH WOMEN

BY

DEMETRA VAKA
(MRS. KENNETH BROWN)

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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FOURTH IMPRESSION

To KENNETH BROWN
WHO HAS NOT CROSSED THE THRESHOLD OF A
HAREM, BUT WITHOUT WHOSE HELP THESE
FRIENDS OF MINE WOULD NEVER
HAVE CROSSED THEIRS

NOTE

The contents of this book are not fictitious, unusual as parts of it may appear to Western readers. There has been some rearranging of facts, to make for compactness — incidents of several days have sometimes been told as of one. Substantially, however, everything is true as told.

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I

COMING HOME TO TURKEY

The mist was slowly lifting — so slowly that one could imagine an invisible hand to be reluctantly drawing aside veils from the face of nature. As the air became clearer, the slender minarets were seen first above the other buildings; and then, little by little, Constantinople, Queen of Cities, revealed herself to our hungry eyes. And as if Nature were but Constantinople's handmaiden, the last of the fog was suddenly transmuted to glorious sunshine, that we might the more surely be surprised and dazzled with the beauty of the Sultan's capital.

The steamer slowly puffed onward. On one side of us lay the seven-hilled city, where all races dwell peacefully together; on the other was Stamboul, the ancient capital of Byzantium, with the remnants of its old wall, and the ever famous Old Serai, dark and mysterious as the crimes committed within its walls.

To the other passengers all was new and thrilling, and they were rushing from one side of the steamer to the other, exclaiming, shouting, incapable, it seemed to me, of appreciating the splendors nature was lavishing before their eyes. The more beauty they saw, the more they shouted, as if by power of lung they could induce their souls to admiration.

I sat quietly in my steamer-chair, too much moved for any expression. To me it was all familiar, and dear as it could not be to casual tourists. I knew the lights and shadows of this land, and loved them as one loves one's native country; for Constantinople was my birthplace, as it had been that of all my ancestors for seven centuries. But I knew that the chorus of delight and admiration would become critical as soon as we should be landed. To me there was poetry in everything; but these others would see only the narrow, dirty streets; and the stray dogs — most vitally characteristic of Turkey — would be just so many snapping curs, howling and littering the streets.

Towards us there came a small tug, with the same smokestack as that of our steamer, and a conversation started between our captain and an inspector of the line. I heard the words that passed between them in Italian, and threw back my head and laughed.

"What is it, mademoiselle?" asked a French colonel sitting beside me.

"We cannot land," I explained. Though I had laughed, I was bitterly disappointed. I felt as a mother must when her baby misbehaves before her friends.

"Why can we not land?"

For a minute I doubted whether it would be wise for me to speak. Of the thirty-five passengers I was the only one who knew

Italian, and therefore, in spite of the loud conversation, I was the only one who had understood what passed between the captain and the inspector.

"You wished to see the Bosphorus the first day," I said at length to the Frenchman. "Your wish will be granted: we are going now to the head of the Bosphorus."

"But why do we not land here?"

"Colonel, after I have answered you, let my words remain yours alone." I pointed to the city, every minute growing lovelier, and gave him the one horrid word — "Plague!"

The Frenchman turned pale. "Not really, mademoiselle?"

I nodded. "Just so! Only don't let it worry you in the least. I have lived through many plagues here; for it comes yearly, and its duration depends entirely on the amount of money needed to be extracted from the imperial treasury."

It was natural that the Frenchman should look at me as if I were losing my mind. It takes a lifetime to understand many things in Turkey: it takes generations to understand the political machinations. The press is not permitted to publish the news; and by the time plain facts have passed through the tenth mouth, they have borrowed such gorgeous hues of phantasy that it takes a seer to discover the original grain of truth. The Oriental — forbidden the truth — finds solace in the magnificence of his inventions.

"What do you mean?" the Frenchman asked again. For three years he had been in command of the smallest fortress in the world, which is on the island of Crete. He had flown the five flags of the powers over his tiny fortifications, and thought he knew Turkey and the Turks — as foreigners do, who have lived in the Sultan's dominion for a time. But I was a Turkish subject, and we had been Turkish subjects ever since there had been Turks in Europe.

"I mean this," I replied. "Money is needed by the officials. The public treasury is empty. The Sultan hugs his own — as usual over-filled. He can be made to give a little, if frightened, and the plague does frighten him: not the actual disease, but the quarantining, and the complaints of the foreign powers. So he will dole out money to clean the city. A little of this will be spent on cleaning — the rest will go to the interested officials. If the Sultan does not give enough at first, the plague will continue until he gives the necessary amount. I know a Greek gentleman into whose pocket a little of that money will go. He holds quite an exalted governmental position, but the government has forgotten to pay him for the last ten or fifteen years."

While we were talking, our boat was steaming on, and the marvellous Bosphorus began to show us its beauties. Its hills — those never-to-be-forgotten hills — appeared now green, now violet, then purple, and again blue. I have watched them for years, and they are never alike. They are small or large, straightlined or full of curves, according to the light, and the hour, and the season. And the deep blue sky hangs low over them, loving them; and it gives to the waters of the Bosphorus its own blue tint, and makes of them living waters, as they hurry on to the Mediterranean.

At the very end of the Bosphorus, where there were no houses, — nothing but a barren rock, — the steamer stopped, and its little boats dumped us on shore. Then it went away, having escaped the quarantining in Russia, which would have been its fate had it touched at an infected port.

We waited here for several hours, all three classes of passengers mixed indiscriminately together. The others fumed and fretted, but I was quite content. In Turkey I forget the value of time. Every minute of living there is joy; why hurry it by?

It was late in the afternoon when a small steamer called for us, and we went down the Bosphorus. And now, in the waning light, the river had changed again, and in its new beauties even the other passengers forgot hunger, thirst, fatigue, and indignation. As we drew near Stamboul, Saint Sophia rose above the other mosques, and against the dark blue sky seemed to me more gigantic than when I saw it last. I thought of its mysterious, closed door, of which every Greek child learns in infancy. I had first seen that door with the believing eyes of childhood, for which no myth is unreal. Later, I had seen it with the eyes of the grown-up girl, whose soul begins to doubt the world, and whose mind Occidental education renders sceptical. But think as I might, — even now, after six years of work in practical America, — that little door to me, as to all Greeks, contained the hope of our race. No matter where we may have been born, nor where our ancestors may have been born, that closed little door means everything to all those in whose veins flows the blood which belongs to Greece, and which, when the time comes, must be shed for the freedom of the greater

Greece, still under the yoke of Turkey — for Macedonia, for Albania, for Thrace, for Thessaly, for all the Greek islands, and, above all, for Constantinople.

Here is the myth, which has been repeated to every Greek child for nearly five hundred years: That door has not been opened since the fatal day the Turkish army entered Constantinople in 1453, when Constantinos Paleologos, the last Greek Emperor, fell defending his capital.

It was on an Easter Sunday, and the clergy were officiating in Saint Sophia. When the cry rang through the church that Mahomet II had taken the city, the clergy, grasping the bejewelled Bible, which had been in Saint Sophia since the Bible was put together, and the Communion Cup, rushed into the little side room, and closed the door behind them. It has never been opened since, in spite of all the efforts of the Turks; and we children of the Greeks are told that, before the door closed the Bishop of Constantinople said that he would come out and finish the Holy Liturgy on the day when a Greek army should march back into Constantinople again, and give it to its rightful ruler and its own religion.

This is the story of the little closed door. Told to us in our cradles, we implicitly believe it for years, — and, who knows, in spite of the scepticism of the age, perhaps we believe it until we die. All I know is that I never look at Saint Sophia without thinking of the little door and what it stands for, and never go into the magnificent building without going to look at it, — just as I always go to see the Venus of Milo in the Louvre. Deep in my heart is the belief that to be as beautiful as she is, and to have lived so many centuries commanding the admiration of the world, something immortal from the soul of Praxiteles must have passed into the statue. And because of that thought I cannot help feeling that the beautiful statue on its pedestal, in that cold, dark place, must be unhappy and homesick; and as soon as I am in Paris I go and stand by her railing. When we are left alone, she and I, I speak to her in Greek. I tell her of all the doings of the Greeks, and little by little, as if a ray of the Attic sun were falling on the white marble, the whiteness softens; it becomes mellower, yellower, and alive, — as the marble is in Greece, — until I can see her shiver. The immortal spark in her is awake. The beauty of the face becomes human, the lips move, and she speaks. But what she says is only for her and me — perhaps it is of the day when the little door in Saint Sophia will open, and the holy mass will be finished, and the Greeks, again leaders of the world, will gather up all our exiles and bring them back to live under the sky of Hellas.

I came out of my dreams when we approached the Galata Bridge landing, and disembarked, not into a Christian Constantinople, but a Mussulman. Yet I do not hate the Turks as many Greeks do. On the contrary, I love them; for I know all their good points and their virtues. Moreover, they conquered us fairly, because our race had decayed. It is our task to deserve to rule again for something besides the memories of our splendid past.

It was very natural, coming home to Turkey. I was born a Turkish subject, and as such I returned. I found nothing changed. Everything was as I had left it; and when I met my mother, we finished the argument I had so cavalierly interrupted six years before.

Yet, though nothing else had changed, I had. I returned to my native land with new ideas, and a mind full of Occidental questioning, and I meant to find out things. Many of my childhood friends had been Turkish girls: them I now looked upon with new interest. Before, I had taken them and their way of living as a matter of course. Generations of my ancestors had prepared me for them, and I had lived among them, looking upon their customs and habits as quite as natural as my own. But during my stay in America I heard Turkey spoken of with hatred and scorn, the Turks reviled as despicable, their women as miserable creatures, living in practical slavery for the base desires of men. I had stood bewildered at this talk. Could it possibly be as the Americans said, and I never have known it?

Now, I was to see for myself, and not only to see but to talk with the women, to ask them their thoughts about their lives and their customs.

When I went away from Turkey I was but a young girl, an idealist, believing implicitly in the goodness of the world. I was now six years older, and I knew the world as a girl has to learn it who is suddenly thrown on her own resources in a strange land. Out of that experience I was going to study the Turkish women who had been my friends in my girlhood. Naturally I was delighted, only a few days after my arrival, to receive the following letter: —

Beloved One, from a far-away country come:

Do you remember your young friends; or have books and knowledge within them made your formerly dear heart like a bookcase? If you still love us, come to see us.

Two loving hearts, and the little buds that have sprung from them.

Nassarah *and* Tsakran, *their buds, and their gardener.*

This little letter, with its English words and Turkish phraseology, set me dreaming of the many hours they and I had spent happily together on the shores of the Bosphorus, before I came to America. And I was filled with curiosity to see how two girls whom I had known so intimately could dwell in such apparent happiness, while sharing the love of a husband between them. A few days later a male slave came for me and my trunk, to pay a visit to the two roses, their buds, and their gardener, who lived some distance away in Dolmà Baktshè.

I arrived at their house a little before lunch time. A French maid received me and helped me off with my wraps, and then a slave conducted me to the Turkish bath, that I might rid myself entirely of the dust and fatigue of the short journey. After I had been thoroughly scrubbed and put into clean clothes, another slave brought me a cup of black coffee; and only after these preliminaries did my hostesses burst into my room, as if I had just arrived. It is a blessed custom which permits guests to be cleaned and refreshed before meeting their hosts. I had lived so long in a civilized country that I had forgotten how much more civilized, in some respects, uncivilized Turkey is.

Nassarah and Tsakran, though married and the mothers of two children each, were as gay and full of life as when they and I rolled hoops along the Bosphorus and cast pebbles into it. They looked like sisters, and very loving ones. One was clad in a loose pink silk garment, the other in rich yellow, and both had their dark hair dressed with pale pink plumes. They seized me and nearly carried me into their living-room, made of glass and called *yally kiosky*, "glass pavilion." There we reclined on low divans and talked for a few minutes before luncheon was announced.

The dining-room was not different from a European dining-room. I gave a sigh for the good old times when the Turks used to sit with their feet curled under them and eat with the ten forks and spoons that nature had provided them with, maintaining that taste is first transmitted through the finger-tips. However, nothing of the delicious food itself was European, and I was delighted to see the courses brought on in brass trays carried on the heads of the slaves. When the meal was finished a slave came in carrying a brass wash-basin. Another followed with a graceful brass pitcher of water; and still a third followed with soap, perfumes, and towels — and we might just as well have eaten with our fingers after all. When we were again seated, or rather reclining, in the *yally kiosky*, I said: —

"Now talk to me."

Nassarah took some tobacco with her slender fingers and rolled a cigarette, which she passed to the second wife of her husband. Rolling one for herself, she coaxed the flame of a match between her palms and lighted them. Then she turned to me.

"What would you like me to tell you, Allah's beloved?" she asked.

"Tell me about your marriage and how you both happened to get the same husband," I said impertinently.

At that both began to giggle, and embrace each other, and make funny faces, like two children.

"Tell her, Nassarah," said Tsakran, "tell her!"

Most Turkish women are natural comedians, and Nassarah had been a capital one from her childhood. She looked about her, taking in her audience, which consisted, besides Tsakran and myself, of about ten young slaves, a sort of ladies in attendance. Then, as if she were a *miradju* about to tell a story, she began with their customary words:

"The beginning of the tale! Good evening, most honorable company!"

All giggled delightedly at this.

"When I married Hilmi Pasha I was so much in love with him I was nearly crazy. I could not go to sleep, but just lay there while he slept, and watched him, and —"

"Oh, you must see him," the second wife burst in. "He is an ideal lover! Blond, with blue eyes, and such a lovely mustache; and tall, with such a beautiful figure!" And thereupon she jumped up and began to walk up and down, to give me an idea of Hilmi Pasha's lordly gait.

Nassarah grabbed her, however, and pulled her back to her divan.

"Keep quiet!" she said. "I am telling the story."

Tsakran made a face at her suppression; and then gave a kiss to the other wife.

"I was telling you," Nassarah went on, "that I was so much in love I could not sleep. A year later my girl, my Zelma, was born, and I was more and more in love with my lord."

At this point she threw herself on her knees, laid her arms on the floor, bent her head down on them, and prayed aloud that Allah might never permit her to live to see sorrow fall on her master. Tsakran and the slaves did the same, and for a few minutes the room was filled with their wailing voices. But this did not last long, and then, as cheerfully as ever, Nassarah Hanoum continued:

"Then my other little girl came, and I suffered — oh! how I suffered! And the learned doctor was called in, and he said I should live, but no more children for me. And I had no boy! No, no boy for my Hilmi Pasha! Just then Tsakran came to see me."

The mention of the auspicious visit was too much for the two wives, and again they fell upon each other's necks, giggling and kissing.

"It was then I thought of a plan, and told Tsakran of it. I was not going to let Hilmi Pasha die without a son. Here was Tsakran, young and beautiful, and ready to marry; for she knew what a good lord Hilmi is."

Tsakran nodded at me violently.

"That night, when Hilmi Pasha's most beautiful head was resting on a most white pillow, I put my arms around his neck and told him my plan, and talked and talked, so that next day it was arranged that Tsakran was to be made ready to marry my Hilmi."

She made an oratorical pause, and looked around her. "Allah rewarded us," she said. "Two boys have been born, the one within two years of the other."

At this point in the narrative a slave announced Hilmi Pasha. The ladies in attendance all rose, bowed, and went out.

I barely remembered Hilmi Pasha, although I had known him before I went away from Turkey. When he came in, he kissed his first wife first, then his second, and it seemed to me that there was a difference in his manner to the two, the first kiss being that of a lover, the second that of an older man to a pet child.

He talked with me concerning affairs in America. It was just after the assassination of President McKinley. All the papers printed in Turkey were only permitted to say that he had died of indigestion. The news of the murder of a ruler can never be printed in Turkey, because it is supposed to put ideas into the heads of the malcontents. However, every one in Turkey who counted at all knew the truth about McKinley and discussed it.

Hilmi Pasha expressed his astonishment at the inability of the American government to suppress the anarchists. "Is n't he the third one they have killed?" he asked.

I explained that Lincoln and Garfield were not killed by anarchists, but Hilmi Pasha only smiled as much as to say, — in our slang, — "What are you giving us?" In Turkey the truth about public matters is so often suppressed that he thought I had some reason for not telling it now.

Since his two wives could hardly follow a conversation on American politics, Hilmi Pasha turned to Nassarah and asked her if she had finished her French novel. From that the talk drifted to French literature compared to English and American. In the midst of our conversation a slave brought in two backgammon boards, handsomely inlaid with ivory, and placed them on low tables similarly inlaid. Then we played this game so universal in Turkey, Hilmi Pasha playing first with me, then with his first, and then with his second wife.

The children came in next and were all kissed by their father, beginning with the eldest, a beautiful girl with light hair and dark eyes, named Zelma after the heroine of a French novel.

I stayed visiting my friends for ten days. In the morning we would get up and spend a good part of the forenoon in the Turkish bath together. After luncheon we would lie about on couches, reading, and playing cards and backgammon, or listening to the dramatic or spicy tales of the *miradjus*, the professional women story-tellers. Then we would go for long walks, and sit on the hilltops to watch the sun set.

One day they proposed that I should accompany them on a visit to a friend of theirs some seven hours distant. I accepted, on condition that they would travel in the regular Turkish fashion and not in broughams. They joyously agreed, and the next morning two large, springless wagons, covered like prairie schooners, were waiting at the door. Their floors were covered with thick mattresses, and wives, slaves, and children all climbed in, and we were off.

Halfway on our journey we ate luncheon by a fountain in a little valley finely cultivated as a market garden. There were with us a eunuch and two slaves whose especial duty it was to sing and play to enliven the journey. I was dressed in Turkish fashion, to avoid causing remark from other travellers, and for comfort.

At the end of our journey we were received in a large bedroom, where slave women undressed us and took us to the bathing-house on the shore of the sea. After the bath, we were put in loose, clean garments lent us by the mistress of the house. Thus attired, we next came to the waiting-room, where the hostess received us. She was middle-aged, and from her deeply dyed finger-nails I knew that she was of the old school. She spoke nothing except Turkish, but that with a volubility to frighten a lawyer. Her waiting-room was very old-fashioned. A settle ran around two sides of the room, covered with hard cushions. There were no chairs. We all sat in a row, with our feet curled under us, and drank sherbet. Two copper-colored slaves came in, very lightly clothed, and danced a Circassian dance. Then an old *miradju* told us a story. The *miradjus* play an important part in old-fashioned harem life. Some of them have great imaginative power, invent their own stories, and attain to considerable fame, as a writer does with us. Others merely repeat what they have been taught, though they may embellish it by their personality in reciting, as an actor embellishes his part.

The story that day was the well-known one of Dérè Vérè, a rather Boccaccian tale, that pointed a strong moral, however. Our prose troubadour put marvellous facial expression into her rendering of it, and kept her audience of some twenty-five women deeply interested. When she finished we all exclaimed, "*Mashalah ! Mashalah !*" in admiration and applause. When this was over, dinner was served in the garden, which was surrounded by a high wall. We sat on the grass, and ate from low tables.

I learned that night, from Nassarah and Tsakran, that our hostess was the fourth wife of a very rich pasha. She was reputed an extremely clever talker, which counts for a great deal in Turkey. She could not, however, get along with the other three wives,—it may be by reason of her gift,—and therefore she lived by herself with her retinue. She had two grown sons, both in the army, and was very anxious to make a marriage between her youngest son and Nassarah's eldest daughter. This proposed alliance kept the two families in close friendship, and although Zelma was still several years too young to marry, she called our hostess "mother," and treated her with great ceremony.

We stayed there three days, and I met several friends of the old Hanoum. Turkish women do not make our abominable abbreviated calls. When they call, they bring their work and spend the day. They are clever needle-workers, and some of them imitate flowers wonderfully in their embroidery. Naturally they were very curious about America, and I told them much of woman's position here. In their expressive faces I read their pity for them, and inwardly I smiled as I thought of the pity that American women feel for *them.*

We made the return trip on a beautiful moonlight night. When we came to start we found our wagons festooned with purple and yellow wistaria. To make the journey pleasanter, our hostess and her retinue accompanied us halfway, bringing also a wagon full of Armenian *hanêndès,* men musicians, to play and sing to us.

Thus in my first harem visit I saw nothing but pleasant relations existing between the various women dwelling under the same roof. It is true that both Nassarah and Tsakran were sweet, commonplace young women

— not very different by nature from many commonplace American friends I have, whose lives are spent with dressmakers, manicures, *masseuses*, and in various frivolous pursuits. With these two young women and their friends I had a peaceful and pleasant time. Except for the absence of men I might almost have been visiting an American household. What difference existed was to the advantage of the Turkish girls. They were entirely natural and spontaneous. They did not pretend to be anything that they were not. They were as happy and merry as little brooks, whose usefulness was limited, but who at least had no aspirations to pass for rivers. They were good mothers, and made one man blissfully happy. They read a lot of French novels, without pretending that they did it for the sake of "culture." They took everything naturally, and enjoyed it naturally. There was no unwholesome introspection — that horrible attribute of the average half-educated European and American woman. They never dreamed of setting the world aright; and when I talked cant to them to see how they would take it, they looked at me in bewilderment, then laughed and exclaimed: —

"Why, little blossom! Allah meant women to be beautiful and good; to be true wives, and real mothers. Is n't that enough for a mere woman?"

I went away from them with the regret with which one leaves something good and wholesome, but also I was disappointed. I wanted to see something new and different; I wanted to discuss and vivisect — and Nassarah and Tsakran were too healthy and happy for that. My next visit, however, was of quite another character. In it I went beneath the surface as far as I could wish.

II

MIHIRMAH

It had been hot all day long, oppressively so; and even now that it was dark, the heat had not relented. Péra, that city of curious noises, was sending up to me the echoing shouts of its venders. In Constantinople the small merchants carry their wares on their backs, and advertise their quality by power of lung. To the conglomeration of advertising tunes was added the shrill monotonous barking of the world-famed dogs, who bark, apparently, with the simple desire of adding to the noises of the hot city; for they bark even when eating.

The mixture of sounds about me was rapidly depressing me, when a servant came into my room, stumbled over a chair, in the semi-obscurity, and handed me a note.

"A slave, mademoiselle, brought it, and is waiting for an answer."

A slave! The word was poetry. It opened a vista of large, bare Turkish rooms, of low, linen-covered divans, of filmy clothes, bare feet, absolute inaction, cooling sherbets — and of quiet. I opened the note and, with the help of a candle, read: —

LITTLE CHERRY BLOSSOM: —

The wind brings me joyous news of your sweet presence in our miserable city. No wonder the sky is bluer and the scent of the flowers sweeter. Will you not, Allah's beloved, gladden a human heart by your luminous presence? Come to me! Hasten to my bosom, so that I may tell you how happy I shall be to see you again. I live now at Chartal. Tell me the train which will be honored by you, and slaves will meet you.

MIHIRMAH.

"Well," I muttered to myself, "I am glad she does not attribute this intense heat to my luminous presence." And to her flowery note I scribbled an answer in pencil, on the back of my card, telling her that I would come to her on the next afternoon boat.

And it was at the quaint landing of Asiatic Chartal that a spacious ox-wagon met me; and, contrary to all Ottoman etiquette, it was my hostess herself who was there to receive me, — Mihirmah, in a loose, pale-blue silk garment, looking as cool as the European women looked hot and uncomfortable in their tight clothes.

"Dear little thunder-storm, do forgive me for coming myself," she begged, while we were embracing. "I had to come. But you shall be left alone to rest as soon as we reach home."

The word "thunder-storm" made me laugh. "Mihirmah, dear, I have n't heard that name applied to me for years. Horrible as it sounds, and great a reflection as it is on my temper, yet it does me good to hear it."

"Why! Do you mean to say that you don't get angry any more when poor Turkish children wish to oppose you?"

"You forget that I don't live among Turkish people any more."

"Well, you are among them now, praise be to Allah!"

With that we stepped into the ox-wagon. There we reclined on the soft mattresses, while the dark silk curtains with their gold tassels flapped in and out, a kind of Eastern electric fan — primitive, but very attractive.

After a drive of a mile and a half through streets as yet unspoiled by Europeans, we came to Mihirmah's dwelling. It was a rambling old structure, half stucco and half wood, and, like most Turkish houses, surrounded by an immense old-fashioned garden, inclosed by a tall wall. The house was almost overhanging the sea of the Propontis, and not far from the house were tents, where one could camp out at a moment's notice.

All the slaves were in the hall, as we entered, and threw rose-blossoms over us. My hostess turned to a pretty young slave of about fifteen, and said: —

"Guselli [beauty] here is your mistress. You are to love her as you love your own face, and to take care of her as if she were your own eyes."

With this she kissed me and went away. All the slaves followed her, bowing to the floor, and kissing their fingers to tell me that I was welcome. Guselli and I were left alone to bathe and to rest.

When I opened my eyes a few hours later, I was covered with flowers, and my hostess was leaning over me, coaxing me to awake.

"You lazy little thunder-storm, I have been sitting here waiting to welcome you formally to my home, and you have allowed your spirit to wander thousands of miles from here. Get up, and let us go to the garden, where dinner has been waiting for us ever so long."

As I played with the flowers I also examined my hostess, clad in a yellow silk *enteré*, her throat bare, and her head adorned with amber beads.

"My dear," I exclaimed, "do you know that you have more than fulfilled your promise? You are stunning."

"I know it," she said simply. She lifted me to my feet. "But now we must run!"

And run we did, down to a part of the garden overhanging the sea. There our dinner was served, beneath the light of Chinese lanterns, while the soothing waves of the Propontis rhythmically lapped the foot of our garden wall.

So far I knew absolutely nothing of Mihirmah's grown-up life. I had seen nothing of her for ten years. We had been friends in childhood, and even after she had gone from Constantinople to Broussa to live, we had written to each other for several years. That night, when we were comfortably settled in her room, I asked her: —

"Mihirmah, tell me all about yourself — and how did you find out that I was here?"

"Djimlah told me, and that you were going to stay some time with her. And I thought if you could do that, you might also be able to come here to me, little white lamb. And you do love me as much as ever, do you not?"

I reassured her. She embraced me several times, and gave me assurance of her own undying affection; then asked: "Now tell me how the world has treated you?"

"Treated me!" I repeated, knowing that in Oriental eyes matrimony was the only treatment worth recording. "It has n't treated me at all. I am earning my living."

"My! But it must be funny!" Mihirmah cried.

"It is, when you view it from a palace, with hordes of slaves to wait on you, and fairylike garments to adorn you; but it is not funny when you walk side by side with stern reality. But now for yourself. Out with it! Are you married?"

Mihirmah's merry face clouded. She was no longer the gay and reckless girl of a moment before.

"Yes, little heart, I am," she said.

I knew from her tone that there was sorrow in connection with it. "No children?" I asked. "No boys?"

"Oh, yes, one boy, one girl. You will see them to-morrow — perfect beauties!" And in her maternal pride her face was happy again.

She did not volunteer more, and there was no use my trying to get the story bit by bit. I knew Turkish women too well. When the time should come to tell me, there would be no necessity for questions. It would be told simply and frankly, as only Turkish women can talk.

Two nights later I heard it. All day long Mihirmah was restless. Upon her babies and upon me she lavished an immense amount of caresses. She proposed various excursions; yet no sooner did we decide upon one than the plan was given up and another considered. The whole household was affected by her mood. There was no singing among the slaves, no chattering, no laughter. Even the children sat upon the rug at their mother's feet and played quietly. The boy, a dear little fellow, would get up often, throw his arms around his mother, and lisp: "Mudder, Ali Bey, the little, loves his mudder — loves her ever so big." Mihirmah would take the child in her arms, kiss him wildly; then hold him away from her, looking into his eyes, and sigh deeply as she put him back on the floor.

At night, as we sat together by the latticed windows and inhaled the sea air mingled with the perfume of flowers, Mihirmah said: —

"Little thunder-storm, when do you think we earn the right to live?"

"I don't know. I never thought about it. When do you think we do?"

"When we conceive a great thought, form a great wish, and perform a good act. I have had the first two, but I never had the last — though Allah gave me the chance once."

Under her breath she added: "Will he ever give me the chance again?"

She was silent for several minutes after this. I waited for her to speak.

"Do you remember Ali Machmet Bey?" she asked me presently.

"Indeed I do. Don't you know how you and I used to trot after him and call him our prophet and our *patissah?*"

"You cared for him, did you not, little mountain-spring? But you left Turkey and forgot him. I left Constantinople, too, but never, never forgot him. How could I? He was the best and most generous boy of all our playfellows."

"Yes," I assented, "and warm-hearted and strong-headed, quick to take offense, and quick to forgive and apologize."

As I spoke a scene of my childhood came back to me. It was in a high marble hall, with a cistern at one side. Ali Machmet came to the chain of the bucket and held it. I came afterward and insisted that I must draw water first. We fought, and Ali Machmet struck me on the head with the chain. No sooner, however, had the chain landed on my stubborn head than he came to me, took from his pockets all he had, — a penknife, a wooden soldier, and five piastres, — and even now I can hear the little boy say: "Take any of these, only say that you forgive me."

I, the greedy little girl, said: "I want all of them if I am to forgive you."

"Take them!" he answered. "Only let me sleep one more night with my soldier, — I will explain to him why he must go, — won't you, thunder-storm?" I gave him back the soldier and the knife, and told him he might draw the water first from the cistern; for his wistful tone when he spoke of his soldier melted my heart; but the five piastres became common property, and we feasted on them that afternoon.

As I was lost in my reminiscences, Mihirmah put her hand on mine. "What are you thinking about, dear one?"

"About Ali Machmet," I answered.

"It is about him I am going to tell you. His image never left my heart, and when his mother chose me to be his wife I went to him as happy as one is in dreamland. My little boy was born in less than a year, and my little daughter a year later. She was only a few months old when I heard my mother-in-law — she is dead now, and may Allah forgive her! — tell to another woman how she made our match. She did not know that I was listening, and I listened because I expected her to say that my lord had loved me from childhood. Instead she said that he had not wished to marry and had repeatedly refused, and that only when she had begged on her knees that she should be permitted to hold his baby before she died, had he given in — he was her only child, you know. When I was proposed to him, he had answered: 'Oh, she will do as well as any other.'

"After I heard these words I ran into the garden. I shrieked, I tore my hair. I became ill, and begged Allah to take me to him; but he meant that I should live. When I became well again, I could not look at Ali Machmet, — I could not bear to hear him speak, — so I left him and came here to my grandparents, with my babies and a few of my slaves. I told my grandmother that I had left my husband for the present. He came to see me, but I refused to see him. Then his mother was taken ill and died, but this did not bring about any change between us. Ali Machmet saw my grandmother and arranged things with her very liberally indeed; not once did he complain.

"You see, little blossom, he did not care for me. He came constantly to see the children; for he loved them dearly. My heart was full of madness, and I even hated my children because he loved them. Sometimes I used to think that I should like to kill them and throw their corpses at him and say: 'You took me so that I might give children to your mother. There are the children! I took their breath away because it was mine.' I came very near doing it, too, for I know now that I had a kind of madness.

"Then a desire to make him jealous, to torture him in some way, came upon me; and without any more thought I made one of my faithful slaves write him an anonymous letter telling him that I had a lover. But I ought to have known better; for Ali Machmet is not the kind of man to believe anonymous letters.

"Finally, in despair, I wrote a love-letter, such a one as I could write only to Ali Machmet himself, with a foreign name on top, signed it with my name, and sent it to my husband. In two days he was here with the letter. I was in my room with the children. He did not have them taken out. He came and sat near me, took the little girl in his lap, and put the boy in mine. Then he took from his portfolio the letter, gave it to me, and waited. I read the letter, and did not say anything. He asked me quietly if I had written it.

"I nodded my head.

“‘To whom did you write it?’ he asked.

“‘To you, since you have it,’ I said.” Mihirmah’s eyes filled with tears, and a sob came to her throat.

“Dear little mountain-spring, I told him just the truth and nothing else; but his eyes were full of anger, and I knew he could kill me if he did not master himself.

“‘Mihirmah,’ he said, ‘I want you to tell me where I can find this man.’

“How could I tell him, since there was no such man? I had only wanted to make him jealous and bring him to me. I told him that there was no such man.

“He took my hands and put the one on the head of my boy and the other on that of my girl. ‘For their sake!’ he said.

“The old jealousy of mine came back to me fiercer than ever. I jumped up, and in doing so threw the boy to the floor, and he began to cry. Ali Machmet picked up the child and soothed it for a while. Then he put him down and came over to me.

"'Mihirmah,' he said very quietly, 'if you don't want to live with me you need not, but you must not be a wicked woman. I am going away now. In a week you must write me this man's name.' How could I? There was no such name."

"But, my beautiful Mihirmah," I exclaimed, "why did n't you write him the truth?"

"Yes," she said quietly, "it was the one chance Allah gave me to perform a great, good act and earn the right to live; but I did not; and in ten days I was a divorced woman. He cast me off as he would a garment that had served its purpose. I had given him a boy, and I was good for nothing more. This thought tortured my heart enough to kill it and turn it to ashes; but my humiliation, and this new proof that he did not care for me, did not cure me of loving him."

Mihirmah took my hands and almost crushed them between hers. "Little blossom, I love him now more than I ever did before, and there are days, like to-day, when every bit of life in me cries out for him. I shall go mad for love of a man who puts me out of his life as easily as one brushes away a speck of dust. But he has been generous in all of his settlements. He even left me my children, on the condition that I was to remain a good woman, and that he should take the little girl away when I was unworthy of her.

"Two days after he divorced me he took the eunuchs away. You understand, blossom, what that means? I was no longer a wife — no one cared for me any more. I could take my choice, and be good or bad. I fought myself for months after this to keep my hands from doing violence to my body. Then the old people were taken ill, first the one and then the other, and both died. Caring for them occupied my mind for a year."

"Is Ali Machmet married again?" I asked.

"Oh, no, dear one! He does not care for women. His heart is in the army. He has only one wish, and that is to get the ear of the Sultan and tell him all that our army needs to be powerful again. For years now he has been waiting and hoping; but his superiors are men of the old régime, they do not believe in new guns and new methods. They prevent him every time from having an interview with our Calif."

"How long is it since he divorced you?" I asked.

"Two long years, dear one, and I have never seen him since. He sends for the children once a week, and keeps them a day and a night with him. That is why you did not see them the first night you came. They were with him. When they come back they talk incessantly of him to me, and though every word they say is a new burn to the old wound, I make them say it over and over again, to be tortured the more."

Mihirmah put her head in my lap and cried for hours. It was almost daybreak before I managed to soothe her and put her to sleep. The next morning she was ill and had to stay in bed, but the morning following she was herself again, and begged me to forgive her for letting her sorrow interfere with my pleasure.

I don't know when I have ever met with more real unhappiness than hers. It was not so much the open outburst as the following days of suppressed suffering that impressed me. I began to wonder if I could not possibly help her — to wonder what the result would be if I went to Stamboul to Ali Machmet's house and told him every word his wife had told me. One minute I thought it a very simple and perfect plan; the next I was not so sure.

Thus several days passed, when suddenly little Ali fell ill.

I went to his room to see him. He had quite a high temperature. "Do you think it can be the measles?" I asked his mother.

She was kneeling beside the child's couch, her cool cheek resting against his hot one.

"No, the little villain has been eating green fruit, he tells me."

I was dejected at the answer. A plan had come to me which the measles would help. Yet I would not give up so easily. I seized Mihirmah's hand and dragged her away from the bed.

"Come with me," I said breathlessly. In the next room I faced her. "Mihirmah, little Ali may be dangerously ill. Send for your husband. Telegraph him, and he will be here to-day or to-morrow."

"But, my lovely jasmine," Mihirmah protested, rather bewildered, "little Ali is not ill enough to send for his father. He will be all right in a day or two. It is his little stomach, that's all."

"But, my darling Mihirmah," I cried, more excited, "don't you see that it does not matter how sick the child really is."

She shook her head. "I have shammed to my husband once, and I am a divorced woman. I will not sham again."

"Mihirmah, has little Ali ever been sick before?" I asked.

"No, he never has. He is his father in looks and in health."

"Well, then, don't you see that Allah is giving you another chance? Send for Ali Machmet; if nothing comes of it you will at least have seen him."

There we stood: I, the Greek, with the instinct of the merchant, wishing to manufacture an opportunity; she, the Oriental fatalist, willing to suffer the will of Allah, but not to avail herself of conditions that needed manipulating. But I had made up my mind that on this day the Greek should win — and I did.

It took time, however, and the telegram was sent so late that there was not time for Ali Machmet to come that day. Mihirmah, when the telegram was sent, retired to her room and prayed for hours to Allah. I sat by the child. I, too, was praying to my God; but I rather think that our prayers were as different as the languages they were addressed in; for I was praying that little Ali might at least have the measles.

That night Mihirmah slept little. Like a white spirit she roamed all over the house, and about the garden.

The morning came, a very lovely one, unruffled by the storm that was going on in our hearts. I don't know how far Mihirmah's prayers had travelled toward Allah, but mine, thanks to the proverb, "*Aide-toi et Dieu t'aidera*," were being answered; for I had seen personally to little Ali's stomach, and my simple measures were acting efficaciously.

The first afternoon train brought Ali Machmet. By that time I had succeeded in convincing Mihirmah that the boy really had all the symptoms of measles. I had become desperate; for she had told me that as soon as her husband arrived she would throw herself at his feet and confess her ruse to him.

As soon as I saw Ali Machmet coming on horseback, I rushed to the child and took off him the ten or twelve coverlets which I had on him, to accentuate his fever. Then, almost by force, I dragged the mother to the bedside, there to await the coming of her husband; and I myself, too excited to do anything but stand about in the garden and tear my handkerchief to pieces, waited the result of the meeting.

Ali Machmet had brought a doctor with him, who stayed with the child some time. Then the doctor went away, and Ali Machmet and Mihirmah were alone by the child's bed. When a slave came and told me that the master had retired to the pavilion we had prepared for him in the garden, I went into the sick-room. Mihirmah, white as a sheet, sat staring at the sleeping child.

"What did the doctor say?" I asked.

Mihirmah looked at me as if she did not know who I was, at first; then she answered that the doctor had said the child did not have the measles, although the vomiting was a bad sign.

I chuckled inwardly, knowing that were I to tell Mihirmah what had caused the vomiting there would be trouble for the Greek infidel.

"What did Ali Machmet say to you?" I asked.

Mihirmah broke down completely at my words. It was like a fierce rain on a hot summer's day. She cried in torrents, and that was all I was destined to know, for the door opened and Ali Machmet came in. She did not see him, but I did, and rearranged my batteries a little, but not too much, for I was as afraid as ever of Mihirmah's tongue.

He came near, and put his hand on her head. She was startled and turned her tear-stained face toward him. There are tears and tears — ugly tears and pretty tears, tears that annoy and those that attract; it all depends on the attitude of the onlooker. I suppose Mihirmah's tears were very pretty to her former husband, for he was very gentle and kind to her.

"And now, Mihirmah, you had better go to your room and rest a little," he said to her, after he had soothed her.

She obeyed him instantly, and I was left alone with him. I knew he was very far from guessing who I was. In a voice as much like a child's as I could make it, I said: —

"Take them, only let me sleep one more night with my soldier, — I will explain to him why he must go, — won't you, thunderstorm?"

Then I laughed and gave him my hand, and it did me good to see how glad he was to see me. We chatted for a half-hour or so, and then the slave came to say that dinner was ready.

"Of course you will eat with us, Ali Machmet?" I said. I saw protest written all over him. "If you do not, you are very cruel, because it is my only chance to see you."

When I had him caught, I hurried to Mihirmah's room.

"Mihirmah, my dear one, there are two

roads to men's hearts, according to an old foolish Greek proverb; through their stomachs, with good food, and through their eyes, with good looks. You are, and you must look, pretty."

I found I did not have to urge her to this, and it was a terribly attractive Mihirmah, with her pale face and tremulous lips, who came into the dining-room. Our meal was a happy one. I was happy because I felt that things were going well. I knew that Mihirmah must be happy, in a bitter and sweet way, in her husband's presence; and who can tell, but that he was happy, too? — at any rate, he did not look as if he disliked it.

We finished eating the twenty-odd dishes that were served us, and had come to the fruit, which is the best part of a Turkish meal, as the serving force retires and the conversation takes a more intimate tone and lingers on sometimes for an hour. All was going well when my bad angel whispered to me to ask Ali Machmet about his work and the army.

"The little fellow will never know what his illness has cost his father," he said in a sad voice. "For years now I have been trying to reach our Calif, but forces stronger than my own always kept me out of his sight. To-day, at last, I was going to have my interview. The palace-physician had consented to smuggle me in to him, and all the chances were favorable. Now the opportunity is lost, and I may never have another."

There was a noise of broken dishes, of a chair overturning, and Mihirmah was at the feet of her husband. I felt that all my scheming had been in vain.

"My lord, master of my life and my death," Mihirmah was wailing, "*I* have ruined your chance. I brought you here when perhaps I ought to have waited."

I jumped to my feet, and ran to her. "Listen, Mihirmah! Let me take Ali Machmet to the pavilion and have a talk with him. I promise I will tell him everything."

"No, little thunder-storm," she said, "you go to the garden. I must speak—I must suffer alone."

Ali Machmet had risen and was trying to lift his wife from her kneeling position. He looked, bewildered, from one to the other of us.

I tried to speak to him; but Mihirmah first implored, then commanded me to go to the garden and leave her alone with him. I went, but not to the garden. I sat at the head of the stairs, to keep the slaves away if they should appear, and to be at hand if Mihirmah should need me.

Opposite the stairs was a long window, and through the upper part of it, which was not latticed, I could see the sky. My tongue mechanically was praying: "Oh! Allah, help her!" I repeated it over and over. A shooting star fell, and my prayer caught it. My superstitious soul leaped. "My prayer caught the shooting star," I found myself saying, and then I kept on praying.

It seemed years that I sat on those stairs —

till I could not stand it any longer. Making the sign of the cross three times over my heart, I crept toward the fatal room. I opened the door ever so little and peeped in; then quietly I drew back and went out into the garden.

"Remember, lady," I apostrophized myself, while I tried hard to keep the dry sobs from my throat, "you have done a great act, and according to Mihirmah you have earned the right to live."

Then I looked up at the friendly sky and laughed, while tears at last came streaming down; for what I had seen in the closed room was what, according to the Orientals, causes Allah to smile, and the flowers to grow more beautiful, and the birds to sing their sweetest song: for in the closed room above, Mihirmah's head was nestling on her husband's heart, and Ali Machmet's face was radiant as that of a lover.

III

DJIMLAH, THE THINKER, SELIM PASHA'S FOURTH WIFE

I LOOKED forward to my third visit with even greater anticipation than to the other two: and, indeed, it promised to be all a student of Turkish customs could ask for. The friend I was to visit was a girl I had known better than any other Osmanli girl. I was to find her the mother of three children, and the fourth wife of one of the most powerful pashas in the Sultan's entourage, — a man much older than herself, to whom her family had given her in marriage without a by-your-leave. I was tremendously interested to see how she had accepted the situation.

Djimlah, moreover, had a vigorous and original mind, which had attracted me in our youth —although as she grew up and began to think of love, her thoughts were frightful.

Once she said to me: "Love has nothing to do with one's thoughts or one's aspirations. It is merely a manifestation of the senses. The intensity of one's love depends on one's physical condition. When a man loves a woman he does not care whether she is good or bad, whether she will be a friend and companion to him or not. He simply wants that woman, and will do all he can to get her. As for the woman, she obeys her instincts as blindly as an animal."

"How about her soul?" I asked.

She laughed scornfully. "You little petal of a flower, woman has no soul."

"Yes, that is what you Turks say," I cried. "But we do not believe in that doctrine. Woman has a soul."

"No, she has n't," Djimlah contradicted; "she is all emotions and senses."

If an ugly girl had spoken as Djimlah spoke, it would have been very repulsive; but the radiant loveliness of the girl could not fail to modify the impression made by her words. While speaking, she would clasp her hands above her head, the sleeves falling away from her white arms; she would half close her eyes, in a way that made the light shining through them softer; and her lips forming her words were fresh and crimson, like a rose with the dew on it. The Greek in me, looking at her, forgave her words — one of the judges who liberated the accused Phryne, because she was so beautiful, may have been an ancestor of mine. And she prefaced all her blighting remarks with such endearments as "little crest of the wave," "little mountain brook," or "flower of the almond tree." It was as if I were being taken to a slaughter-house through a rose-conservatory.

Foreigners she hated intensely, and to be the wife of a foreigner was to her the most miserable existence imaginable.

One day, when she was telling me that "love was a necessity of the body, like food and air, and that when the senses awoke and asked their due, they ought to get it," I asked: —

"Djimlah, since love is nothing but the rightful demand of sense, and since you believe in its gratification, while at the same time you hate foreigners so tremendously, what should you do if you fell in love with a foreigner?"

"Oh! I should let him love me for a while, and then have him killed."

She said this without the slightest tremor in her voice, without the faintest added pink mounting her cheeks. What a sinner she would have made, had she been a European woman! How many souls of men she would have sent to eternal damnation with a slight shrug of her superb shoulders!

When she had written to me in her faultless French, asking me to visit her, I was both pleased and surprised; for I knew her husband's household to be one of the very orthodox, into which foreigners were almost never allowed to penetrate. During my girlhood, although I had been in many haremliks, I had never happened to be in one where more than one wife was living, and they had all been somewhat Europeanized. Selim Pasha's was the first old-fashioned harem which was opening its doors to me.

It was Djimlah herself who called for me in her brougham. A tall, powerful eunuch opened the door of her carriage, and when I was in it, jumped up to his seat beside the coachman, and we were off. Inside was Djimlah, with two slaves. When she took me in her arms and kissed me, I was enveloped in an atmosphere of subtle perfume and rich luxury. I thought how a French writer would have loved to describe her. Her immaculate yashmak, transparently gauzy, let me see her beauty, resplendent, yet somehow softer than I remembered it. She had always been of the tall, self-reliant type: now she looked still more sure of herself, invested as she was with the name of a powerful pasha.

In our girlhood we had been on the same

social footing; but with the turning of the wheel of fortune I had gone under and had become a breadwinner — she had been carried up to the top. The present meeting was the first for six years.

It is difficult to talk in a carriage anywhere, but in Constantinople it is impossible. Rolling over the miserable pavement makes a noise worthy of the dogs. Djimlah and I, after our first embrace, lay back against the cushions and closed our eyes, she holding my hand in hers. Once, when the carriage stopped for a minute, she opened her eyes and looking long and earnestly at me, said, with delightful Oriental frankness: —

"You have changed, little flower. America has robbed you of your youth. I must keep you here and help you to get it back."

When we arrived at her palace, she took me directly to my room, where a pretty slave was waiting for me.

"This is your room," she said, and, pointing to the slave, "she is yours also." She opened a large cupboard whose shelves were filled with clothes: "And here is all you will need while you stay with us." To the slave she added: —

"Kondjé, this is your mistress. If she does not look any better when she leaves than she does now, let me never see your face again. If she improves, you can ask me anything you like." Drawing the slave to her and petting her, she went on, pointing to me as if I were an inanimate object: "Kondjé, she used to be very pretty — look at her now! Could you believe that she is younger than I?"

The slave shook her head, and looked me up and down compassionately.

I burst out laughing. "Really, Djimlah, you must learn to spare my feelings I have just come from America, where we don't tell the truth like that."

"Nasty country, anyhow!" she observed.

The slave came to me and threw her arms around me. "Young Hanoum, is it a disappointment in love?" she asked sympathetically.

"Nonsense!" Djimlah interjected, "Foolishness! that's the reason. Instead of letting a good strong man take care of her, she is doing it for herself — disgracing Allah and his sons. Now good-by, and rest all you can."

Kondjé took her task to heart. She bathed and massaged me, as if I were to be made over. Then she brought out several garments, and after discarding them all as not befitting my beauty, — or to be more accurate, my lack of it, — she at last satisfied herself from a fresh armful from the closet.

After I had rested, I went down to the garden, where Djimlah presented me to the other three wives of Selim Pasha, their ladies-in-waiting, and a few guests. We were twenty-seven in all, and we reclined under a canopy of flowers, and waited for the coming sunset. A high wall hid us from the outside world, and a pergola, covered with pink and purple wistaria, protected us from any masculine eyes which might chance to look over from the side of the palace reserved for men. I took my seat by Djimlah, on a lot of cushions.

Presently one of the women reached up a bare arm, plucked a bunch of wistaria, and threw it at another woman. Simultaneously several bare arms went up, and pink and purple wistaria went flying right and left, so that in a few minutes the ground and the Turkish rugs on which we were reclining were covered with flowers.

"Give us some music, beautiful ones," said the first wife, who was the head of the household, and who was addressed as Validé Hanoum.

Some of the young slaves picked up their zithers, and the music of the East charmed our ears for a few minutes.

"See now, see how fast he is travelling!" exclaimed Djimlah, pointing to the sun. "He is getting impatient to reach his home and throw his arms around his women-folk and rest from the day's labor."

She turned to me. "Do you remember, little bride of the river, how you and I used to run to catch the sun when we were small? And do you remember how once we were so engrossed with him that we fell into the Propontis?"

"Yes, I do remember," I answered; "how very happy we were then, Djimlah!"

"Why 'then'?" inquired the young woman. "Are we not happy now? Are you not, Allah's little ray?"

"Are you?" I questioned.

"Of course I am," the young wife answered, clasping her youngest child to her bosom. "I am even more happy now with my babies and my lord." Then she added, as if the thought had just come to her, "You have not taken a master to your heart, dear one — why? You remember how we used to plan about our husbands, and you always said you would marry a prince ever so great and powerful. I have my husband; where is yours, little blossom?"

"I have searched all Europe," I replied, "and in despair I have crossed the ocean and gone to America. He is quite elusive; he evades me everywhere."

"Does it make you sad, Allah's little cloud?" said the Validé Hanoum, leaning over and running her fingers over my hair.

"Look! look at him now!" cried another, pointing to the sun. "He is kissing the hills good-by. Look, how he makes them blush; how pink they grow in their love for him! In their joy now they will sing in colors."

"Mashallah! mashallah!" exclaimed several women, kissing their fingers to the departing sun. From outside the walls a shepherd was singing the sunset song as he walked behind his sheep. The slaves, this time of their own accord, were softly singing, "Happy, happy we, dwellers of this beautiful land!"

These women were all intoxicated with the beauty of nature before them. Nowhere have I seen such pure enjoyment of life. Nothing was bothering them. They had no other career except that of being beautiful and happy.

The color of the sky was spreading, taking in the Byzantine wall, the Golden Horn, and the slender minarets silhouetted from afar; and the East little by little crept again into my blood, and I let myself go and be happy in mere existence.

After sunset the Validé Hanoum gave the signal of departure, and at once wives, children, guests, and slaves rose to their feet. Two eunuchs carried the rugs and pillows, while the others carried the young children. There were eight of these black cerberi — two for each wife. As we descended from the hill the dwelling presented itself in full view. It was a huge, ugly wooden structure of ninety rooms, looking more like a factory than a rich residence. Of the ninety rooms only twenty were given over to the master and his retinue; the rest belonged to the women.

The Validé Hanoum, in her position as first wife, occupied the first floor, and had more rooms assigned to her than any other wife. Djimlah, my friend, as fourth wife, was destined to see the world from the top of the house; and she had only fourteen rooms for herself. There was but one bath-house, and that belonged to the Validé Hanoum; but all the ladies took their hour-long ablutions there. On each floor there was a connecting passage to the other side of the house, through which the master could visit each wife without being seen by the others.

As I said before, this household was a very strict one, and the women of the house obeyed all the laws of their creed, and followed the prescribed customs rigorously. Their nails were profusely dyed, and their indoor robes were one-piece garments of very costly materials. Their hair was done up in braids, while gauzy pieces of silk, cut bias, were arranged round their heads. Saluting with the graceful *temena* — touching the floor, the knees, the heart, the lips, and the forehead — was customary, on every occasion; and strict attention was given to precedence.

The Validé Hanoum sat at the head of the table, the second wife sitting at the foot. The third wife sat at the right of the first, and the fourth at the right of the second. On no occasion were these places changed. The first wife was served first, and it was she who gave the signal for conversation. Also permission for inviting guests or going out to pay visits was granted or refused by the Validé.

As far as I could judge, there was no jealousy between the wives. The others looked upon the Validé as a mother, though she was little older than the second and third wife. I was given to understand that the harmony of the household depended absolutely on the character of the first wife. As the household was very Oriental, the only chairs to be seen were in the dining-room. There were several reception rooms, one of which was supposed to be furnished in European fashion. It was as European as the Oriental rooms in America are Oriental.

In the sixty-five rooms assigned to women there was not a room that could be called a bedroom, that is, that had the appearance of being given over to that use. Instead, there were many rooms bare of furniture except for rugs and pillows and one or two low tables inlaid with mother-of-pearl. These rooms had beautiful damask hangings at the windows, and a low platform with two steps leading up to it, on one side of the room. On this platform was a silken rug, and baskets or vases of flowers. Had one had the curiosity to open the large cupboards in these rooms, one would have found all the bedclothes neatly folded away. The Turks never use hard mattresses, like ours, but several well-kept soft ones, made of cotton. From the closets the bedclothes were taken at night and arranged on the low platforms. This mode of living, I suppose, is a remnant of their former nomadic habits.

On the first night of my arrival, while I was lying on my platform, thinking over my day's experience, the door of my room opened softly to let Djimlah pass. I was certain that while she sat in my room a eunuch was crouching at my door. She was ready for the night — her hair done up in that queer Oriental fashion becoming only to Eastern women. It was divided in two and parted in the middle; each division again subdivided in two, and each braided loosely. Then the ends of the two front braids were tied up by a wide, soft piece of silk, which hung loose in the back and formed a kind of background for the face. Djimlah's headdress was of pale blue, which brought out the color of her deep blue eyes. As she sat at the foot of my platform a lovely perfume of roses emanated from her.

"Sun-ray," I said to her, "your approach signals roses."

"Yes, blossom of the almond tree," was her reply. "I have had my rose-bath. You shall have yours presently. But before Kondjé comes, let us make use of the flying time — not so?" Djimlah always spoke Turkish, to the consternation of my poor ears, which had been out of training for years. Though she spoke French and English perfectly, she seldom made use of them. She abhorred anything foreign to Mahometanism, her strong affection for me being her only exception.

"Little river," she said bluntly, as is the Turkish custom, "I hate to think of you living away in that half-civilized country of America. You really must stay here and be married."

"Do you think, Djimlah, my dear," I asked, matching her own frankness, "that I should be happy with a quarter of a husband?"

She laughed till the tears came to her eyes.

"I have just been paying a visit to Nassarah and Tsakran," I went on; "but Tsakran is a little kitten, and I don't think it matters to her whether she is the first or second wife; and Nassarah, for the sake of the boys, does not mind sharing her husband."

"There is where you make a mistake, my little one," Djimlah said. "You never share your husband. What a man gives to one woman he never gives to another. What he is to his first wife he never is to his second or third. It always amuses me how slow you European women are to understand men. You put up with the greatest outrages in order to remain the only wives. A man is not like a woman, who is essentially a mother. A man by nature is polygamous. His nature must expand: sometimes it is more than one woman that he must love; sometimes he gives himself over to state matters; sometimes it is a career or a profession that he needs. But whatever he does, the love of one woman is not and cannot be enough to occupy him. When a man has a nature to love more than one woman, what happens? According to our sacred laws he may marry them. They are loved and honored by him, and the children of this second or third love are his children, and share his name as they share his property. But what happens in your countries and with your habits? A man repudiates his first wife, generally with a great deal of scandal, for a second. He gives her little money, and her children lose their father's companionship. If the man cannot divorce his wife, he leads her the life of a dog, and lives a libertine himself. Or if he loves another woman, and she loves him, and they live together, the woman carries a burden of shame, and the children born out of their great love are outcasts."

As Djimlah spoke of our system her blue eyes widened, her long earrings shook, and disgust was painted on her beautiful features. I chuckled inwardly, remembering some lectures I had heard in America in which the women of the harem were spoken of as most miserable beings, and in which our duty was pointed out to us to work toward their deliverance.

"Djimlah," I said, "you speak of course from your experience, as perhaps the most loved of the wives. Suppose to-morrow your husband were to cast you aside and bring into the household a younger and possibly a handsomer wife — what then?"

Djimlah's pretty face lighted up with a smile. "You dear, dear *yavroum*, you will never understand. If my husband has ten more wives, it does not alter my position. I shall be his Djimlah then as always. He will still love me for myself, for the love I have for him, and for the children I have given him."

"But, Djimlah, would n't that love be greater if he loved only you, and shared it with no one else? If you were the only affection in his life?"

Djimlah caressed my hand. "My little

one, don't make this mistake in life. If you were the most intelligent woman in the world, the most entertaining, the most brilliant, the most beautiful, you could never be everything to your husband. That is the way Allah has made them; that is the way all of them are — and those that are not are good for nothing."

"Djimlah," I said at last, perceiving that she would never see my point of view, "how about the women? Don't they, too, need more than one in their lives?"

Djimlah smiled her wise smile again. "*Yavroum*, women are not like men. Women, good women, natural women, are mothers above all. Their hearts are filled the moment they become mothers. All their effort, their ambition, their love, settles on the head of the child."

Just then Kondjé came in, carrying a small basket full of rose-petals. She spoke in low tones to the young wife, who blushed furiously, and shyly bade me good-night.

"Honored Hanoum," the young girl said to me, "may I be so blessed as to have the pleasure of giving you your bath of roses?"

"You may," I answered, "if you will call me anything else except 'Honored Hanoum.' I can stand being the bride of the brook and the cloud of the sky, but I draw the line at being 'Honored.' It makes me feel old and venerable. And, besides, you know I have not yet a husband, so I can't be 'Honored,' anyway."

Kondjé, giggling, took down my hair, filled it with rose-petals, and rubbed them into the hair and scalp. Afterwards she did the same to my body, so that in half an hour I and the room were filled with the odor of roses, and I went to sleep dreaming of flowers.

The following days revealed to me a Djimlah so foreign to her former self as to be an entirely new person. Even her beauty had changed. It was no longer the audacious allurement of a handsome animal: there was calm and repose in it. She was still a woman for men to love desperately, but with a higher love, if one less maddening than the one she would have inspired six years ago.

One night, as we were sitting on the foot of my bed and talking of the past, I said to her: —

"Djimlah, you have changed morally and mentally much more than I have physically, though your change has been for the better. What has done it?"

She laughed, and there was a little scorn in her rippling young laugh. "You dear little crest of the wave, because you have been studying and running around the world, 'improving' and 'enlarging' your mind, you think that you know something. Why, you are ignorant as my baby. You may think you are ahead of me, but really you are very far behind. The mysteries of the world, which you do not even dream of, are mine. You will never know them until you love a man and are his. Then —" She clasped her hands over her breast, and her face changed its expression. It was lovely with a loveliness mystic and holy. She leaned towards me, and in a voice tremulous and full of melody, spoke of her motherhood. "To be a mother! To see the pink rosy mouth of your baby seeking life from your very body!" She raised her hands. "O Allah! how good you are to women! No, little mountain-spring, books will never teach you life as a man and a child will. Books may feed your mind, but your heart will be starved — and human beings must live through the heart."

She had moved me; I believed her; but habit was stronger than momentary emotion. I was living through my mind, and the next minute I asked her: —

"You used to say that love was nothing but a matter of the senses. Did you find it so?"

"At first, yes — then all at once it changed. You become a new person — a good woman — when Allah gives you a child. Something restful comes over the senses, and they retire to the background; they no longer dominate love."

"And thus a woman acquires a soul?" I inquired flippantly.

She replied soberly: —

"A woman has no soul. It may be that if she had she would spend her life cultivating it, and forget that she had to devote herself to those to whom she must give a soul. A woman is a one-thought creature. Besides, she stands for abnegation: to know life, she must give, always give, and never ask for anything in return. Through giving she grows — never through receiving, for then she shrinks."

This was my Djimlah of six years ago! She had travelled far and fast on the road which leads to the divine throne, through her love and her mother-love. She was right: books do not teach life.

IV

VALIDÉ HANOUM, THE RESIGNED FIRST WIFE

THREE days after my arrival in this Turkish household, as I was coming out of the bathing-house, I was presented with a small basket trimmed with gauze and flowers. Examining it, I found that it contained an embroidered scarf, and a note from the Validé requesting me, if willing, to spend the day with her. I was delighted — as was Djimlah — at this mark of consideration from the Validé.

The older Hanoum received me at the threshold of her apartment with great ceremony. We both salaamed to the ground in the proper salutation, the *temena*, the Validé, as the older, beginning first.

This day I spent with her was one of the most interesting of my stay. Very rarely have I been so fortunate as to meet a woman who had so little of the common feminine pettiness in her nature. The Validé Hanoum was easily queen of her household. She was in her thirty-eighth year, but retained much of what must once have been her chief claim to beauty, her splendid figure. I do not think her face could ever have been considered beautiful in the East, for their standard is very high. In America she would have been called a very handsome woman. She was of the brunette type, with wonderful brown hair, clear complexion, and large gray eyes. But her great charm was her personality. She directed the conversation in French, as she had heard me say the day of my arrival that Turkish was bothering me. According to Turkish standards she was highly educated. She knew Arabic and Persian literature well, and, through translations, Greek. Though she spoke French fluently, she was little acquainted with French writers; and in speaking the language she used Oriental idioms entirely. She was a great admirer of the Greek tragedians, and thought Sophocles understood women well — "as well as a man can," she added with a whimsical smile.

Her breadth of character struck me as so unusual that I told her, after I had spent half the day with her, that were I to spend a few years with her I should become a nice person. She liked the compliment very much, and said so. Turkish women do not make our pretence of disparaging compliments to themselves. After a second thought she said earnestly: —

"You would not like our life after a while."

"Why?" I asked.

She considered for a few minutes. "For many reasons; but uppermost for your blood. There is no use going against nature. For generations you have led a different life, and you could not accept ours."

"Do you think that it would be impossible for European women to come and live with you?"

"No, my child, not impossible, for many European women have married our men and lived happily; but it would be impossible for you. By the way," — she was smiling now, and I knew that it was coming, — "I shall be very happy to see you marry, *yavroum*, to see you happy, for you have become dear to me, the little I have seen of you."

I have learned to expect this refrain of "you must marry"; for the Turkish women consider marriage the acme of human happiness. I have come since to think like them, but at the time it did annoy me.

The Validé was very unlike my friend Djimlah. What she knew of our life she did not condemn. She even considered certain ways of ours superior to theirs. The keynote of her character was tolerance and kindness. In the course of the conversation I told her of what I had asked Djimlah on my first night in the household, and of Djimlah's ways of looking at things.

"Do you agree with her, Validé Hanoum?"

I asked, burning with the desire to hear her views on the subject.

She looked before her for a few minutes, as if she were considering either Djimlah's words, or whether she should really take the trouble to enlighten my poor brain. After a while she drew from her embroidered bag some tobacco, took a sheet of tissue paper out of a book three inches long by one wide, and made herself a cigarette. A slave presented her the flame of a match between her palms. The Validé lighted her cigarette and took two or three puffs, holding it with a pair of gold tongs, which hung by a golden chain from her waist.

"When I married my husband," she said, "I was only fifteen and he was seventeen. Within four years two big boys were born to us." She raised her eyes to the ceiling and thanked Allah. "I was very happy — terribly happy." She lost herself for a few minutes in that happiness. "When my husband told me that he wished to take another wife to his bosom, my heart was knifed to the middle. I cried for days and days. I walked about like one in a dream; but all the while I knew that he was right, that the thing had to be done. After a while I fought myself down, but I could not live with the second wife. I told him so. He bought me a beautiful house at Scutari, and I moved there with my retinue and slaves. Of course my husband was to come and see us whenever he liked. This arrangement pained him very much; and in a few months he came to tell me that he had given up the idea of second marriage. We lived for another year, when I found out that the other woman was dying for love of my husband, and that he still longed for her. I knew also that my life was no longer the same. I made them marry, and I went back again to my house at Scutari. I was young, I was proud, I was hurt. I did not see why my husband should want another wife. Women when young don't understand their husbands very well. Two years passed, a little girl was born to them, and they named her after me. My husband came to see me very often, but I could not feel the same toward him. He understood it, and never asked for more than I could give him. My child, can you believe it, but I was glad, glad that he suffered for me — that if I could not make him love me, at least I could make him suffer.

"At the end of two years the mother and child came to see me. The child was very delicate; the mother looked dying. She stayed with me for a few days; and when it was time to go, she could not go — I could not let her. I understood many things then. When I told my husband that I was to keep them, he fell to my knees and cried like a boy."

She leaned over and took my hand. "You never know, *yavroum*, in what way Allah is going to help you to come out of your mean self. But he is always watching and waiting to give us our chance. He gave me mine and I took it, and with it came back the love of my husband, a newer and younger love, a love that was tried.

"After that Allah marked me for his own, and I travelled the road of sorrow. It is a long, long road, and you follow it bleeding. But at the end Allah shows you his face, and peace descends upon you. You understand many things that you never understood before, and the people become your brothers. The way I was to know sorrow was of the hardest; my first-born boy was killed before my eyes. A few months later a baby girl came to me in this world. When I learned to love her and she to put her arms around me, Allah took her from me. In my motherly grief I forgot my husband and my duties towards him. That is the way always with women. I made his home sad and unlivable. It was at that time that the Sultan gave to my pasha a beautiful young woman from the palace. As our ways are, he had to free her and marry her. Though he did so, he has never made her his wife, as he did not raise her veil after the wedding ceremony. She was confided to me to take care of and to protect. Her life was not very happy, and I did all I could to make it so. After our master married Djimlah, she dared even speak to him about Aïshé; but he was quite stern in the old creed, and he did not believe in gift-wives. Djimlah, however, gave her her second-born boy to love and bring up as her very own, and in this way to learn the joy of motherhood. The child was taken to her immediately after its birth. Djimlah had an idea that should our master chance to see the beauty from the palace with his child, he could not but love her. It hurts us all to have a young and beautiful woman among us who may never know a good man's love. But it was no use. Our pasha went to her and saw the boy, but the adopted mother still remains an official wife only. She is very happy, however, with her little gift-son, and he loves her more than he does his own mother. Of course he does not know that Djimlah really is his mother. Ever since that arrangement, though, I think there is more happiness all round in the house, for Allah has sent his blessing for a good act."

I could not help asking how Djimlah crept into the household.

"I gave her to my husband," was the quick reply, "and it was the happiest deed of my life. You see, *yavroum*, when I gave myself to the luxury of sorrow I could not easily come back to the life's joys. The second wife was sickly, and the third only official. And one night, when it was cold and the wind blew, I thought of my master all alone," — she spoke as if she were describing one perishing on a desert island, — "and I thought of my wickedness and cast about in my mind for a happier inmate to come to our home. Our Djimlah has proved to be Allah's gift to us all. My little girl, who was born after Djimlah's three sons, and named after her, is the joy of my old age." (She was thirty-eight, remember.) "This little girl is Allah's new proof that he has forgiven me my selfish grief."

"Validé Hanoum, in your heart you do not approve of men being allowed to have more than one wife, do you?" I asked.

"But I do, *yavroum*," she said vehemently; "that is why I told you my life, so that you could see how much happier we all are if things are done as Allah ordained them."

"But, Validé Hanoum," I persisted, "you do not really think that God meant men to have more than one wife?"

"I think that he must, my little one, otherwise I do not see why he has created them different from us — why they do not have the same maternal instincts as we have."

"Just the same, Validé Hanoum," I said with some warmth, "I do not think that God meant it; and if so many privileges were not allowed to men they would content themselves with one wife."

Here the Validé showed her tact and her sense of humor, for she leaned over, took me to her, kissed me tenderly, and said that after all Allah might have meant it while God did not. "You see, *yavroum,* things are different, perhaps, with you than they are with us."

That the Validé did not mind my heterodoxy she manifested by inviting me to spend another day with her, when she took me on a long drive, on her way to a shrine to pray. When she left the mosque she told me gayly that she had prayed to Allah for me only that day, and that she knew I could not go on now without God's blessing, and that a husband sooner or later was coming to me. On our way back she told me that she was expecting her little daughter-in-law, who was not very strong, and who needed the care and advice of the old. "She is coming with her mother and baby. My son, too, will be with them. You must see them," she said proudly, "for there are not two lilies more beautiful in this world than my boy and his bride."

V

THE GIFT-WIFE FROM THE SULTAN'S PALACE

From what the Validé Hanoum had told me about Aïshé Hanoum, Selim Pasha's third wife, it was natural I should take a special interest in this poor lady, who was wife and no wife, and mother only by proxy.

I had known before that, when the Sultan of Turkey particularly desired to honor one of his pashas, he presented him with one of the beautiful women who adorned his palace and who had not yet become his wife. I also knew that, according to Mussulman etiquette, the pasha had to free her and make her his wife. But I had never before met such a woman, and until I knew her history I had taken no particular interest in Aïshé Hanoum, beyond noticing her beauty; for she was of a very retiring disposition. I had thought her one of those persons who are content to live their lives in a dream and let reality pass by.

But meeting her, after I knew her story, I asked her if she was not going to invite me to spend a day with her.

"Indeed I am," she replied, "only it is not my turn. I must find out when the second wife wishes to have you; for my turn must wait on hers."

"She told me that she was not well enough to see me."

"Oh! then will you spend to-morrow with me?"

The next morning, I had just finished my morning toilet when a slave came to conduct me to Aïshé Hanoum, from whom she presented me with an indoor veil. I arranged it on my hair, to show my appreciation of the gift, and followed the slave to the floor below, where her mistress lived.

When I entered her apartments, I found her kneeling before an easel, deep in work.

As the slave announced me, she rose from the ground and came to me with outstretched hand. It struck me as curious that she offered to shake hands, instead of using the *témena*, the Turkish form of salutation, since I knew her to be extremely punctilious in the customs of her nation. I suppose she did this to make me feel more at home.

"Welcome, young Hanoum," she said, after kissing me on both cheeks.

"Do you paint?" I asked, going toward the easel, disguising my surprise at meeting with such disregard of Mussulman customs in this orthodox household.

"No, not painting, just playing. It is only an *impression*, not a reproduction of one of Allah's realities." Good Mussulmans do not believe in "reproducing Allah's realities"; yet there stood on the easel a charming pastel. Even orthodox Moslems, I saw, were not above beating the devil round the stump.

"How very beautiful!" I exclaimed. "Aïshé Hanoum, you are an artist."

"Pray! pray! young Hanoum," she protested, a little frightened I thought, "pray do not say such things. I am not an artist. I only play with the colors."

"Let me see some more of your playing," I persisted.

Rather reluctantly, though wishing to comply with her guest's desires, she brought out a large portfolio, containing several pastels and water-colors, and we sat down on a rug to examine them.

Whether they were well done or not I cannot tell; but they were full of life and happiness. The curious part was that, whenever she painted any outdoor life, she painted it from her window, and on the canvas first was the window, and then through it you saw the landscape as she saw it.

The more I looked at her work, the more enthusiastic I grew. "You must be very talented," I said, turning to her. "It is a pity that you cannot go abroad to study."

"But I have studied many years here."

"That is all very well," I said, still busy looking at the pictures; "just the same you ought to go to Paris to study."

"What for?" she asked.

"Because I think you have a great deal of talent which unfortunately is wasted in a harem." As I spoke, I raised my eyes.

Ordinarily I am not a coward, though I do run from a mouse; but when my eyes met her finely pencilled ones, there was a curious look of anger in them that made a shiver go down my back. "If I have said anything to offend you," I said, "I beg you to forgive me. Believe me it was my enthusiasm."

She smiled in a most charming way. If she had been angry it had gone quickly by.

"But why do you wish me to go to Paris?" she asked again.

"I don't know," I said, "except that Paris is nearer Turkey than any other great centre, and I feel that you ought to have the advantage of being where you could get all the help possible."

"What for?" she inquired.

I began to feel uncomfortable. I knew her very little, and this was the first time I ever visited a former *Seraigli* (one who has been an inmate of the Imperial palace).

"Because," I answered lamely, "when a person has talent she generally goes to Paris or to some other great artistic centre."

"What for?" again insisted the question.

If I had not been in a harem, and in the presence of a woman of whom I was somewhat afraid, my answer would have been, "Well, if you are foolish enough not to know, why, what is the use of telling you?" Instead, while that exquisite hand was lying on my arm and those big almond-shaped eyes were holding mine, I tried to find a way of explaining.

"If you were free to go, you could see masterpieces, you could study various methods of painting, and if it were in you, you might become great in turn."

"What for?" was the calm inquiry.

She was very beautiful; not of the Turkish type, but of the pure Circassian, with exquisite lines and a very low, musical voice, and of all things on this earth I am most susceptible to physical beauty. At that particular moment, however, I should have derived great pleasure if I could have smacked her pretty mouth.

"Well," I said calmly, though I was irritated, "if you had a great talent, and became very famous, you would not only have all the money you wanted, but glory and admiration."

"What for?" she repeated with inhuman monotony.

"For heaven's sake, Aïshé Hanoum," I cried, "I don't know what for; but if I could, I should like to become famous and have glory and lots of money."

"What for?"

"Because then I could go all over the world, and see everything that is to be seen, and meet all sorts of interesting people."

"What for?"

"Hanoum *doudou,*" I cried, lapsing into the Turkish I had spoken as a child. "Are you trying to make a fool of me, or —"

She put her palms forward on the floor, and then her head went down and she laughed immoderately. I laughed too, considerably relieved to have done with her "what for's."

She drew me to her as if I were a baby, and took me on her lap. "You would do all these things and travel about like a mail-bag because you think it would make you happy, don't you, *yavroum?*" she asked.

"Of course I should be happy."

"Is this why you ran away from home — to get famous and rich?"

She was speaking to me precisely as if I were a little bit of a thing, and was to be coaxed out of my foolishness.

"I have neither fame nor riches," I answered, "so we need not waste our breath."

"Sorry, *yavroum*, sorry," she said sympathetically. "I should have liked you to get both; then you would see that it would not have made you happy. Happiness is not acquired from satisfied desires."

"What is happiness, then?" I asked.

"Allah *kerim* [God only can explain it]. But it comes not from what we possess, but from what we let others possess; and no amount of fame would have made me leave my home and go among alien people to learn their ways of doing something which I take great pleasure in doing in my own way." She kissed me twice on the cheek and put me down by her. "You are a dear little one," she said as she began to prepare a cigarette.

"Aïshé Hanoum," I asked, "don't you really sometimes wish you were a free European woman?"

She wet the tissue paper of her cigarette and gave it a careful twist. "I have never seen a European man to whom I should like to belong," she informed me.

"Goodness gracious, why should you belong to any man at all?"

"But I should not like to be one of those detached females that come to us from Ingleterra and your America. They are repulsive to me. A human being is like a tree or a flower; it must be productive and useful. A woman must have a lord and children."

"But you have no children," I could not help saying.

"Have I not, though?" She clapped her hands, and to the slave who came in she said, "Bring in my son, please."

A few minutes later the young bey was brought in. He was a sturdy little fellow, full of health and good looks. No sooner was he in sight than mother and child were kissing and loving. When, after a few minutes, he was taken away, Aïshé Hanoum informed me that till he was twelve years old she was to teach and instruct him herself. "We are always together except when I have guests. Then the child is out to play. You say I have no children! I wish you would stay here till the day I am to give my daughters away."

"Your daughters?" I repeated.

"Yes, I am liberating two of my young slaves. I bought them when they were ten years old. I instructed them myself; and now they are going to be freed and given into marriage, to be happy in the love they will give and take."

I thought that in her voice there was a sad note as she said the last words; but then I am a very imaginative person, and my imagination is apt to play tricks with me.

"I *am* going to stay," I said. "The Validé [the first wife] asked me to wait for the wedding, and also for the arrival of her son and his young wife."

"Oh! I am indeed very pleased. You know, *yavroum*, we all like you, and should be very glad to have you be happy in the love of a good man."

"Aïshé Hanoum," I asked, "are you happy?"

She looked at me for a minute or so while she inhaled and then exhaled the smoke of her dainty cigarette.

"Would you like to know?"

I nodded.

"I will tell you all about myself— but you must not make me forget that you are my guest, and that I must look after your comfort." She clapped her hands, and a young, pretty slave came in to take orders. I fancied that the slave had been crying.

"You are not the one I called for," said Aïshé Hanoum; "and what is more, you must stop coming in when I call."

The tears began to trickle down the cheeks of the young girl. I was quite surprised. In all my experience with Turkish women, I never saw them stern with their slaves, and this young girl looked particularly miserable.

The official wife clapped her hands again, and this time another slave came in.

"Bring us in some sherbets and some cakes and cold water."

The slaves departed, and in a little while the one who had been crying returned. Aïshé Hanoum looked at the girl, who, elaborately unconscious of the stern look, put her tray down, brought near us two low tables, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and disposed the eatables on them.

"Have I not told you not to wait on me?"

The girl crossed her arms on her breast and stood motionless. She was very pretty; rather tall, with glorious copper-colored hair, and luminous eyes.

"What will the young Hanoum here think of your disobedience to me?" the mistress asked.

The girl looked at me through her tears.

"I am sure that if the young Hanoum knew of the sorrow that is eating my poor heart, she would take my part," she said, with great pathos in her voice.

"I am inclined to think she would," said her mistress, "for I am afraid the young Hanoum is not very practical."

In an instant the young girl was prostrated before me, kissing my hands, kissing my feet, and imploring me in the name of all the flowers that grow on great Allah's land to hear her and intercede with her mistress.

I took the child's hand into mine and tried to comfort her; then turning to her mistress I begged to know the cause of her grief.

"I will tell you, though I am afraid you are the wrong person."

At a bound the slave was by her mistress. Her greenish eyes were dark blue and fiery. "If *you* present my case it is lost. Let me have the word; let me show her my heart; for it is my heart she is to judge, not yours. Be just, my mistress, since you give me this chance."

"Suppose we put it off. Suppose Hanoum Djimlah be the judge, and not this Hanoum here. She does not know our ways very much. She is not of our faith, and she is young in experience. She has not yet a lord to her heart," the mistress explained.

The slave drew herself up and fairly towered above us. Her little hands were clasped tightly on her bosom. She threw her head back and looked at her mistress. There was defiance in her whole attitude.

"You might just as well say that you want to cheat me out of the chance you offered to give me."

Aïshé Hanoum sighed and gave in. "Serve us first with something, for we are thirsty."

The slave poured out some sherbet in the tall golden goblets — a present to Aïshé Hanoum from the Palace — and ministered to our wants; then she took her place on the floor, crosslegged, and said to her mistress: —

"You are not to speak, beauty, at all, till I have done."

"Very well, foolish," said the mistress.

"Young Hanoum, my story is not very long, so I will not tire your kind ears with my miserable woes. I only want justice, and may Allah help you to help me. I was five years old when I was given to my mistress here. I have been faithful, good, patient, obedient, loving to her. I have never vexed her. When

I was fourteen years old, she wanted to free me and give me as a wife to a man. Why should I be given to a man when I want to stay here? I pleaded and pleaded, and she said that I might stay two years more. The two years passed as a day, and I was again to be given as a wife. I pleaded and cried again, and my mistress said that I might have two years more. Young Hanoum, have you ever watched the clouds on Allah's blue rug? Those years granted to me, faded from my unhappy eyes as quickly as they, and for days now she will not speak to me because I will not go. But I stay outside this door and wait on her just the same. She says that this time it is to a very nice, young, wealthy man she is going to marry me. But what is a man to me? It is my mistress I want; it is her face that must gladden daily my miserable existence. It is here by her that I want to live and die. Oh! young Hanoum, give me justice; and may the cypress tree that grows by the grave of your dear ones defy all the winds!"

Thereupon the girl began to cry; and between her moans she continued: "This mistress is for me what to the trees are the leaves, what to the birds are the wings, what to the little babies is a mother. She says if I do not marry she will sell me to some one."

I can give here the words, but they cannot show the pathos, the passion that the girl put in them. It made my heart melt within me, not from pity for the slave, but from envy for the mistress. Think of owning such a faithful creature!

"I have heard your side," I said; "and now you would better go, and I will talk it over with your mistress."

The slave came to me, kissed my hand ever so tenderly, and left the room.

"Aïshé Hanoum," I asked, "why do you want the child to be married and leave you, since her happiness is with you?"

"You do not understand all the circumstances, *yavroum;* that is why you ask me. You see she is mine, and I can free her and make a home for her. If I die to-morrow, what will become of her? She might be freed, and she might not. In the last case she would have to belong to some one else for seven years before being freed. Or she might be changing hands all the time. I love her; she is my little girl, for I brought her up; and I want to see her marry and have babies of her own. She can see me all she wishes to. But what she wants is to feel that she belongs to me. She is getting old. It is time for her to be wife and mother. She is so beautiful; her figure is so perfect. It would be a pity to waste all that beauty in life."

"But she will be unhappy if she goes away from you."

"No; she does not know. A woman is never so happy as in the love she bears to her little ones and to the giver of them."

"What will you do?" I asked. "Will you really sell her to somebody else?"

"No, indeed; but I was going to send her away for a while. Only she is of such a passionate nature she might do violence to herself. I have to act with great discretion."

"What manner of man is the one you want to marry her to? She probably does not fancy him."

"I have tried hard to have her see him from the window," said Aïshé Hanoum laughingly; "but every time I take her to the window and bid her look, she closes her eyes. She will be very happy indeed, and will have a slave of her own, but she is obstinate."

"Why not let her wait for a while?" I suggested.

"I am afraid of losing this good chance. I want to see all of them that are of age well provided for."

"Suppose," I said, "that I decide that you are to let the girl alone?"

She laughed her merry little laugh, and looked so beautiful that I wondered how a woman with such a wonderful beauty as hers could be given to two men and still remain unloved by them.

"*Yavroum*, you would not really decide to do anything so foolish, and destine such a beautiful handiwork of Allah's to barrenness? Besides, while she was telling her woes to you, I found a way out of the difficulty. I am going to offer to let her live with me after her marriage. At the end of a year she will know that I was right."

She clapped her hands. The girl came in.

"Come here, Kioutchouk-Gul." (The slaves often are given fancy names by their mistresses. This one meant Little Rose.)

The slave came and made herself ever so little at the feet of her beloved mistress.

"I think Allah has shown me a way out of our troubles." She took the girl's hands into hers. "It is not marriage you object to so much as leaving me?"

The girl nodded.

"Then how would you like to marry and still live with me? We both should have our way."

In a second the girl was in the arms of

Aïshé Hanoum, calling her all sorts of endearing names, in which the Oriental language is so rich.

Thus the incident ended. The sight of the tremendous love she had inspired in her slave gave me an idea of the beautiful character Aïshé Hanoum must have.

"Aïshé Hanoum," I said when we were left alone, "you promised to tell me all about yourself. Will you do so now?"

"Yes, *yavroum;* but will you tell me all about yourself and your life in America afterwards?"

I promised.

"I was born in Roumely, where my father was a nomadic chief," she began.

The mere word Roumely to those who are born in the East is full of suggestion of ballads of valorous deeds and supernatural doings. Aïshé Hanoum became to my mind a more romantic figure than before.

"I remember quite well the way we lived. All we possessed was done up in bundles, for we moved from one place to the other constantly. At night, if it was rainy or cold, the men would pitch the tents; and while the women and children slept inside, the men would sleep outside, one always on guard. But generally we all slept under Allah's own eyes. Life was like a dream, and like a dream it quickly vanished. My father died, leaving my mother alone to care for six little hungry mouths. We left the mountains and walked for days to reach a town. When there my mother took to doing all kinds of work to support us. I was only six years old. All I remember of that time is like another dream, only this time a bad one and it lasted longer, though, as days and nights count, not as many as five hundred I think. My mother's life became a sad one, and there was no longer sunshine and music. We lived in a little house which to me was like a wooden box, and soon we all became ill, and were very miserable. I do not think Allah meant his people to live in houses. He made the world so beautiful, that we might live in it and be happy. To this minute I cannot accustom myself to live in one room. That is why I have this big space."

In fact she had taken three rooms, sixteen by twenty, and had them thrown together, slender columns supporting the ceiling. I was wondering what she would say if she saw a few of New York's apartments, where even Allah's sun is not potent enough to pierce high walls and enter.

"One day, however, my mother came to us with joy in her face and said to me: 'My children, your father must be having in his favor the ear of the Prophet. Here comes to us a miraculous help. A rich Hanoum wishes to buy six or seven little girl slaves. I am going to sell you three little girls, and with the money go back to the mountains to bring up your brothers as true Roumeliotes, not like mice in a city.'

"We were very happy. I did not know at the time what slavery was; but my mother explained it, and we were glad of the chance given to us."

I must explain here that slavery in Turkey is not what the word implies in Christendom. A slave in Turkey is like an adopted child, to whom is given every advantage according to her talents. If she is beautiful, she is brought up like a young lady and is given as a wife to a noble and rich man; if she is plain and clever, she becomes a teacher; if she is plain and not clever, she learns to do the manual work, sewing or domestic labor. According to the Koran, a slave must be freed after seven years of servitude and be given a dowry of no less than two hundred and fifty dollars.

Slaves always fare better than if they stayed at home. Generally they are drawn from the people who have been slaves themselves, or from orphans. To a Turk who is poor, selling his children into slavery means giving them advantages which he could not possibly give them himself.

"Were you sorry to leave your mother?" I asked.

"How could I be sorry," was her reply, "since I was giving her back to her mountains and her sunshine? My two little sisters and myself journeyed for days, sometimes on the backs of animals, and sometimes in what seemed to me then wooden boxes on wheels.

"In the house of my new mistress I remained with my sisters for seven years. She was lovely to us, and although we did not live out-of-doors all the time, we lived in a large house, in a very large garden, and by the water. It was in Smyrna. We had never seen anything before except mountains and trees. When we came to Smyrna we were afraid of everything, even of the commonest things. After we had learned that all the strange things would not hurt us, we were taken out on the water in a small boat, and after a time we were taught how to make it go ourselves. We also learned to read and write, and we were taught French, and to paint and play the guitar, and to dance. They were not as strict there as they are in my household here. When I was fourteen I was spoken of as a very beautiful person, and a Hanoum who came to see me once said I was only fit for the Sultan. My beauty travelled from Smyrna to the Palace, and some one came out to our house to see me. That is how I was given to the Sultan on his anniversary."

"Were you sorry to be sent to the Palace?" I asked.

She looked at me as if I had asked something that only people out of their minds could ask.

"I was so happy," said she, as if speaking to herself, "that for nights I could not go to sleep. At last the day came when I was to see the great ruler of the greatest nation of the living world." She crossed her hands on her lap with a far-away look on her face, as if gazing on her dead youth and its dreams.

As I looked at her I was wondering

whether she had ever had any happiness, and unconsciously I found myself asking her, "Were you happy in the Palace?"

My question brought her back to the earth, and she laughed her gay little laugh, and patted my hand.

"You dear *yavroum*, you are such a little baby, why should I not be happy? To me was given the honor of being sent to the Calif, which was no less an honor to my new mother than it was to me."

"Did you see the Sultan?" I asked.

"Y-e-s. When I reached the Palace I was taken to my rooms; and after a few days, when I was sufficiently rested, they dressed me ever so beautifully for the Pattissah to see me."

Again that far-away look came into her pretty face, but she went on with her story.

"It was in a large living-room, we were all assembled — such beautiful women and so many! I was by the chair of the Sultana when he, our ruler, came in. I was presented to him, and he smiled kindly at me, and said that he hoped I should be happy in the Palace. I was given by his order many gems and costly robes and slaves of my very own, but Allah never meant for me the honor of wifehood with the Master. *Kismet, Ne apeym.*"

"Oh! Aïshé Hanoum!" I cried when she stopped. "Do tell me more of palace life."

"No, no, *yavroum,* you cannot know that. It is not spoken out of the Palace; but you may see the little girl I am hoping some day to send there."

I gasped. "You don't mean to say that you are going to send somebody to the Palace?"

"Why, you dear little crest of the waves, why should I not, when I find a little girl who I think is going to be most gloriously beautiful."

She clapped her hands and Kioutchouk-Gul came in beaming with smiles. Her mistress returned the smiles as she said: —

"Bring me in Gul-Allen" (Rose of the World).

A few minutes later a little girl was marched in. She was tall and well shaped, and carried her head magnificently. She was four years old, but looked seven. If she grows up to be as beautiful as she looked then, she will make a stunner. The curious part was that she looked like her mistress. Her eyes were that almond shape, the color, as Rossetti expresses it, like the sea and the sky mixed together, only in theirs the landscape was mixed in too. Every feature in her face seemed to have been nature's great care. The color of her skin was clear white, and you could see the veins as if they were finely traced with a blue pencil, and her mouth was Cupid's bow.

"Aïshé Hanoum," I begged, when the child left us, "please don't send her to the Palace. Suppose she never becomes his wife. She will be happier with a young man for a husband."

Aïshé Hanoum looked puzzled at me.

"Suppose you had a great talent, and your mother never gave you a chance with it, would you think her just? You see, *yavroum*, I am giving you an example from your own standards to judge. Tell me, would n't you blame her all your life?"

I acquiesced.

"It would be the same with my little Gul-Allen."

"But suppose when she grows up she refuses to go, like the other?"

"Oh, she will not; for she will be brought up with this idea in mind. Her education is to be very careful. Besides, in the heart of every Mussulman woman, the highest honor on this side of the earth is to give a son to the Pattissah. You have to be a Turkish woman to understand this. And now you must see my palace robes and my gems."

Kioutchouk-Gul received her orders, and in a few minutes she came in, carrying on her head a bundle two feet thick and four long, and in that space carefully folded were twenty most gorgeous garments! Think of the space twenty of our stupid gowns would require!

Kioutchouk-Gul opened the Persian shawl, and as she unfolded each garment she paraded it on her slim shoulders. In my childhood I was put to sleep with Oriental tales, where the princesses wore magnificent clothes that only a fairy queen's wand could produce. Those garments belonged to that category. Bright silks represented sky and stars worked with silver and gold and fastened with precious stones. There was one of dark red on which were embroidered with silver thread white chrysanthemums, and the heart of each flower on the front border was a topaz!

Think of having all these clothes and the jewelry to go with them because the Sultan cast his eyes five minutes on you. No wonder that in the heart of every Mussulman woman the desire to go to the Palace is so great. Though it is religion that prompts them, where is the truly feminine heart that is indifferent to beautiful garments?

From Aïshé Hanoum I went to my room rather bewildered. Orientalism was like a labyrinth: the more I advanced in it, the more entangled I became. One woman after another was confronting me with a new problem, a new phase of life; and I felt stupid and incapable of understanding them. It hurt my vanity, too, to find how small I was in comparison with them. I should have liked really to sell myself to them for a year, merely to be able to live with them continuously, to try to understand a little more of their lives. They interested and charmed me: they were so much worth understanding. There was so much of the sublime in them, which is lacking in our European civilization. I felt petty and trivial every time I found myself facing one of those conditions which they understood so well. It is true that in Europe and America there are, and have been, women who sacrifice their lives for big causes. But as a rule it is a cause to which glory is attached, or else some tremendous thing they half understand, and to which they give themselves blindly because of its appeal to that sentimentality which is so colossal in European women. With these Turkish women the sacrifices came in the small things of daily life, things for which they received no thanks, for which their names did not become immortal. And through their self-abnegation they were reaching heights unknown to us of the western world. I do not mean to say that our women do not sacrifice themselves in every-day life. They do; but it is not with the sublimity of soul with which these supposed soulless women do.

VI

HOULMÉ HANOUM, THE DISCONTENTED

WHILE I was visiting Selim Pasha's household, Djimlah's youngest half-sister, Houlmé, was there, too. She had been brought up by her maternal grandfather far away from Constantinople, somewhere in Asia Minor, and I had never seen her until the present visit. She was very friendly to me from a distance, like a timid wood-goddess, who dared not approach. Now and then she would smile at me, and her large eyes seemed full of questioning. She did not look modern, and did not move like ordinary women. I always thought of her as Antigone.

One evening, unexpectedly, she came to my room, looking like a vestal, and carrying a basket full of flower-petals. She asked if she might give me my flower-bath. This was a great honor to a mortal like me, for her grandmother had been a sister of the Sultan. I anticipated that now, at last, she would talk to me; but she gave me my bath almost without a word. Then, when she asked permission to spend the night with me, and after the slaves had made her bed at the foot of mine, I again expected some conversation from her: again young Houlmé crept into her little bed, stretched her arms out, palms upward, and prayed that Allah, the only true God, should guard the living and help the dead, and quietly laid herself down to sleep.

For more than an hour I lay in bed, and sleep would not come. I wondered whether the young Turkish girl was asleep, and fell to thinking about her. My thoughts on Houlmé were interrupted pleasantly by a nightingale. I have heard nightingales all over Europe, but they do not sing as they do in the East. The reason perhaps is because all over the world they are mere birds, while in the East they are the mythical Bul-

Buls, the souls starved for love. It is believed that once a Bul-Bul loved a rose, and the rose aroused by the song woke trembling on her stem. It was a white rose, as all roses at the time were — white, innocent, and virginal. It listened to the song, and something in its rose heart stirred. Then the Bul-Bul came ever so near the trembling rose and whispered words which the rose could not help hearing. "*Ben severim sana Gul-Gul.*" At those words of love the little heart of the rose blushed, and in that instant pink roses were created. The Bul-Bul came nearer and nearer, and though Allah, when he created the world, meant that the rose alone should never know earthly love, it opened its petals and the Bul-Bul stole its virginity. In the morning the rose in its shame turned red, giving birth to red roses; and although ever since then the nightingale comes nightly to ask of the divine love, the rose refuses; for Allah never meant rose and bird to mate. Thus, although the rose trembles at the voice of the nightingale, its petals remain closed.

That night the memory of this story was particularly dear to me, because it brought back to me my childhood dreams. In order to enjoy better the nightingale I sat up. The little platform on which my bed was made creaked, and Houlmé spoke.

"Are you awake, too, young Hanoum?"

"I have been unable to sleep," I said.

"I have not been asleep either. There is no sleep to-night for mortals."

She got out of bed, went to a closet, and brought out two white silk burnooses.

"Come, young Hanoum," she said. "Come, let us no longer stay in our beds."

I threw over my shoulders the soft garment. Houlmé put hers on. She took my hand, and we went out on the little balcony.

It was one of those wonderful Oriental nights, when the beauty of nature is intoxicating, maddening. The sky was indigo-blue without the shadow of a cloud; the stars were brilliantly lighting the hills and the garden, and a half-grown moon was travelling fast toward the Bosphorus. Except for the singing of the nightingale all was still.

"That is why we cannot sleep." It was Houlmé speaking. "There is too much love on the earth to-night; and we being of the earth cry for our own. My poor heart has travelled over endless seas and is with *him* now, and my young life is crying for him."

It was a strange night, and that Mahometan girl standing next to me in her glorious beauty, and talking a language mysterious as the East, captivated my imagination. As I looked at her, at her large black eyes and arched eyebrows, her ivory complexion and her lovely mouth, I felt that she could do things that an ordinary woman could not. And the night had loosened her tongue, as it had the nightingale's.

"I sometimes think," she went on, "that it is wrong for women to think and to know much, for they kill nature with their thoughts.

Men, great men, never think when it comes to love; they only love and taste life. It is as it should be, as Allah meant life and love to be. What has our poor woman's mind to do with the workings of the universe? If it were not for my foolish thinking, I should not be craving love now like the Bul-Bul."

Turkish women in some ways are very different from the women of other races. They may be more educated than our college girls, they may speak four or five languages, and read the masterpieces of each of these languages, but they remain children of nature, as we do not. If you spend a day with them and they love you, you will know their hearts and minds as they truly are. There is no false shame or prudery about them. They speak as they think and feel.

Houlmé apparently felt very much that lovely midsummer night, and her heart was breaking for something I could not well make out. She drew me to her and kissed me.

"Glorious one, do you suffer as I do?"

"I don't know how you suffer," I answered.

She clasped her hands to her bosom. "Oh! I suffer as if my poor heart were on fire. It is crying out for that other heart which, but for my foolishness, would be near me now."

I did not care to ask anything for fear of stopping her half-confession.

"Houlmé," I said instead, "you are very beautiful. I would give anything to be as beautiful as you are."

"Why should you like to have my beauty, beloved Hanoum? You said you did not wish to be married; beauty is only good to a woman to give to the man she loves; you ought not to have any, and Allah ought to have made you black."

I shuddered. On a night like this, everything seemed possible, and I looked around for the wicked *ev-sahib* who might change my color.

"Foreign Hanoum," said Houlmé, "tell me a little about the women of England.

Are they so beautiful that they can make men forget their vows to other women?"

"Some of them are very handsome," I answered, "but not as beautiful as you women of the East. To my mind you are the only kind of women that could make men forget their vows, and Mahomet knew what he was about when he made his laws."

"You are not right about our Prophet, beloved Hanoum, for he never meant women to be kept apart from men; but what you say gladdens my poor heart — or are you speaking thus because you have divined my sorrow and wish to comfort me?"

"I know nothing about you, Houlmé, except what little you have told me to-night."

"Oh! glorious Hanoum, sometimes I should like to feel as you women of other lands feel, though I know it to be wicked to wish to be different from what the great Allah made me. But I am sorry I have been brought up as a woman of the West."

"But you are not," I said. "You are less of the West than any Mussulman girl I have met. What makes you think that you are like us?"

"Because, young Hanoum, I was brought up by foreigners. I speak English, French, and German as well as I do my own language, and I know more of your literatures than I know of our own. The thoughts of your great writers have made a great change in my poor Eastern thoughts. You see, young Hanoum, I was brought up by my maternal grandfather, who is a Turk of the new school, which believes that women ought to be educated to be the companions of men. He brought me up with my cousin Murat, to whom I was betrothed as soon as I was born. He is only four years older than myself, but I shared his studies and his games till I reached womanhood and had to take *tcharchaf*. I was then fourteen. Of course from that moment I did not see my cousin, as I was living in the haremlik and he in the selamlik. When I was eighteen my respectable grandfather called me to him and said that the time had come for me to be the wife of Murat Bey. As I said before, my grandfather is of the new school and does not believe in forcing marriage upon women. He asked me if I were ready? I was ready — not to marry, but to ask a favor.

"I must tell you, young Hanoum, that from the day I took myself to the haremlik to be a woman and not a child, I gave my limited mind to the studies of your great writers. From them I understood that there was a greater love than the love based on affection, and I wanted to make sure that Murat preferred me to other women. I asked, therefore, my learned grandfather to send Murat for three years out in the world, in the different capitals of Europe, in some diplomatic post. If at the end of the three years Murat loved me still, and thought me worthy to be his wife, I would marry him. He has been for a year in Vienna, then for a year in Paris, and now he is in England. As was my wish then, Murat never writes me — but he sends me books and presents all the time. Since he has gone I take one daily paper from Paris, Vienna, Berlin, and London. I also take several monthly periodicals, so that my mind may be ready for my cousin when he comes back to me. From what I read in your papers, I do not like your world, and I am glad that I am a Mahometan girl. But I know also this, that it is wrong, wrong for women to think."

"It is a dangerous experiment," I said, "not for women to think, but to do what you have done. You sent the man you love away before he really knew you. If he had seen you as a woman, I doubt whether all the beauties of Europe could make him forget you. On the other hand, it is hardly fair to expect a youth to remember a child of fourteen. Why don't you write to each other, in order that at least he may know your mind?"

"Because I do not wish him to be reminded of me except by his own heart."

"Houlmé," I said, "are you not rather

romantic? What in the name of all flowers made you do such idiotic things?"

"You don't understand me very much, young Hanoum; that is why you think me romantic. The day before I took *tcharchaf*, Murat Bey took me to his father's grave and there he promised me to remain faithful to me all his life after he became my husband. He vowed that I shall remain his only wife, unless Allah did not send us boys. He gave me then a dagger with a poisoned blade and asked me to stab his heart if he ever was untrue to me after our marriage. As I grew older, and read much about life, I knew that it was unfair to Murat Bey to tie him down to such a great promise, unless I gave him a chance to see the world and many women."

"Does he know why he was sent abroad?"

"Oh, yes! I wrote him a long letter and explained to him my thoughts. At first he did not like the idea, for he said he knew that he loved me and wanted to be married to me, but at last he consented."

"Suppose that he falls in love with another woman and marries her, what will you do?"

"I shall use the dagger for my own heart," she said simply.

To think that she would kill herself for an idea! For Murat could be no more than an idea to her, she never really having known him as a man. I looked at her and wondered what things she might be capable of doing when she should love a real man.

"Houlmé," I asked, "suppose your cousin came back and you married him, and after a few years of marriage he wanted another wife, as so many good Moslems do; would you use your dagger?"

Her beautiful black eyes were wonderful on that glorious Oriental night; they looked like big stars, and as they met mine I had no need of an answer.

At that moment a light breeze from the sea passed, and in the stillness of the night we heard the moving of the leaves and flowers.

"They are awakening," said Houlmé.

"The nightingale has reached their hearts. You can hear the rose tremble on its stem."

With the Eastern legend behind the notes I could fancy the Bul-Bul implore the awakening rose for a love that was never to be granted.

Houlmé was listening with all her heart in her eyes. One would say in watching her that she understood every syllable the lover bird sang. The song of the nightingale rose to a transcendent pathos and then abruptly stopped.

"Poor little feathered lover," the young Turkish girl murmured, "you have been denied a little love which would make your singing immortal, and we shall hear you no more."

Houlmé made allusion to the Oriental belief that on some such night as this the nightingale's song, at its tenderest, most passionate note, does reach the heart of the rose, and that if then the rose still denies him, he dies. As the little body is never found, it is believed that the other, silent nightingales make his grave at the foot of the rose-bush.

Whether this thought brought graves to the mind of my companion I don't know, but of a sudden she was on her feet and announced to me that she was going to the little cemetery to pray. There was no use arguing with her, as I saw her mind was made up; and in a few minutes, like two white phantoms, we were in the garden, where Houlmé filled her arms with roses. Then she opened a gate, ever so little, made in the thick wall, and we were out in the open fields. She walked along majestically, without the slightest misgiving of her misconduct, and in a short while we were in the little cemetery. Once there, she walked directly to one grave, covered it with her flowers, threw herself on it and prayed. To me, crouching under the cemetery wall and imagining each tombstone either a phantom or, worse yet, a human form advancing toward us, it seemed as if she prayed an eternity. At last she got up, turned her tear-stained face to me, and asked me to give a prayer for an unhappy woman.

On our way home I asked her if she knew whose grave it was. Not till we found ourselves again on our balcony did she speak.

"That grave, dear blossom, is Chakendé Hanoum's," she said.

"Who was Chakendé Hanoum?" I asked. Houlmé looked at me incredulously.

"You have been here so many days and no one has told you Chakendé Hanoum's story?"

"No one," I answered, "and I am glad, for I would rather that you tell me her story since you love her grave so."

The light sea-breeze became more audacious every moment, and brought to our balcony the perfumes of the thousands of flowers growing beneath us, as Houlmé began.

"Chakendé Hanoum was the daughter of Nazim Pasha. She was educated in the Western fashion. She was as beautiful as an houri and as good as Allah's own heart. She was given as a wife to Djamal Pasha, a young and dashing courtier. They were very much in love with each other, and he promised her that she should remain his first and only wife. Their marital life was blessed with two boys and one girl. Chakendé grew more beautiful as happiness became her daily portion.

"One day, when she was returning with her retinue from a visit she had made in Stamboul, on the bridge of Galata and in a closed carriage, she saw her husband in company with a foreign woman. That night when he came home, she questioned him, and he only answered that the lady was a foreigner. Chakendé Hanoum understood that her husband did not wish to be asked any more questions. Early in the morning, however, she sent for her brother, and from him she learned what was generally known.

"She took a few of her slaves and went to her country place. She stayed there for several days, giving the situation her whole thought; then she came back to her husband.

She told him that she knew the truth, that she had thought the matter over, and had decided to give him back his word, as to her remaining his only wife. Thus he could marry the foreign lady. It was then that Djamal Pasha turned her from Allah. He laughed at her, and said that Mademoiselle Roboul of the French theatrical company was the kind of a woman that men loved but did not marry. Chakendé Hanoum said nothing, but that very same day went into her garden and plucked roses from a laurel tree. You know, young Hanoum, what you can do with those roses?"

A shiver ran down my back as I nodded.

"A few nights later, when Djamal Pasha was about to retire, Chakendé Hanoum prepared his sherbet for him. Her hand did not tremble, though her face was white as she handed it to him. It did not last long; Djamal Pasha died from an unexplained malady; but Chakendé Hanoum kept on plucking laurel roses daily. After a little while they put her in her little grave, too, five years ago."

We sat silent for a while. The moon had travelled fast and was now near the water, bridging the Bosphorus with her moonglade. The garden, the hills, and the water changed with the changing slant of the rays, and became more wondrously enchanting still, though that had not seemed possible before, and enthralled me with the fascination of the East — the East whose language and ways of dealing with right and wrong had been alien to me for six years.

"It is wrong for women to think — it is wrong, at least, for us women of the East." It was Houlmé Hanoum who spoke again. "They educate us and let us learn to think as you women of the West think, but the course of our lives is to be so different. Since they let us share your studies they ought to let us lead your lives, and if this cannot be done, then they ought not to let us study and know other ways but our own. If Chakendé

Hanoum were an Eastern woman in her thoughts as she was in her heart, she would have been with us now a happy woman, making her motherless children happy, too."

"Houlmé," I said, "for some of you, Occidental education is like strong wine to unaccustomed people. It simply goes to your heads. Look at Djimlah, your sister; she certainly is as educated as you are, but she could never behave the way you or Chakendé Hanoum did.

"True," Houlmé assented. "My sister is educated as far as speaking European languages goes, but she has never been touched by Occidental thought. To her, her husband is her lord, the giver of her children. To me, and to those who think as I do, a man must be more. He must be to his wife what she is to him, all in all. Is not this what the Occidental love is? I did not use to think this way till I read your books. I wish I had never, never known. I do not like to hurt the feelings of my venerable grandfather, for I am the only child of his only daughter, as Murat is the only child of his only son, and I know that he did by me what he thought best. Sometimes, however, I should like him to know that with his new ideas he has made me miserable by allowing me to acquire thoughts not in accordance with our mode of living."

"Houlmé, if your cousin came back, and you became his wife and had any daughters, how would you bring them up?"

"I have thought of this very much indeed," was her answer, "and I should like to talk it over with Murat when he becomes my husband. I do not think Turkish parents have any right to experiment with their children. I should not like to give to my daughters this burden of unrest. I should like to bring them up as true Osmanli women."

"Then you disapprove of the modern system of education that is creeping into the harems? Were you to be free to see men and choose your husbands, would you still disapprove?"

"Yes. It took you many generations to come to where you are. Back of you there are hundreds of grandmothers who led your life and worked for what you have to-day. With us it is different: we shall be the first grandmothers of the new thought, and we ought to have it come to us slowly and through our own efforts. Mussulman women, with the help of Mahomet, ought to work out their own salvation, and borrow nothing from the West. We are a race apart, with different traditions and associations."

"Is this the thought of the educated women of the harems to-day?" I asked.

Houlmé's face saddened as she said:—

"No, young Hanoum, I am alone in this thought as far as I can make out. The others say that we must immediately be given freedom and liberty to do as we like with ourselves. Indeed, they look upon me with mistrust as if I were a traitor."

"Have they any definite plans of what they want to do?"

"I doubt whether *you* would call them definite plans, but I should like very much to have you come with me to our next meeting, which will be in two days. There are forty of them now and I think that they will do more harm than good, as they are going about it in a very irrational way. Their motto is, 'Down with the Old Ideas.' Naturally they refuse to obey their parents and their husbands."

"How old are they, on the average?"

"The youngest of them all is seventeen and the oldest forty. They are all unmarried, with the exception of five who have left their husbands."

"You are not in sympathy with their movement though you belong to it?"

"No, young Hanoum, for I am afraid that it is more romanticism that guides them than thought for our beloved country. I call them to myself, 'Les Romanesques des Harems,' though they call themselves 'Les Louises Michel.'"

"Goodness gracious!" I exclaimed, "Louise Michel was an anarchist!"

"So are they," said Houlmé; "and because I tell them that through anarchy we can do nothing, they will not hear me."

I told her that I should certainly be glad to go with her to the meeting of the reformers, and she promised to take me soon.

We did not go inside the house that night. Bringing some pillows and rugs out on the balcony, we slept there until the morning light drove us in.

VII

SUFFRAGETTES OF THE HAREM

ASLEEP, I gradually became conscious of a low murmuring song, and opened my eyes to meet those of my little slave Kondjé.

"May the day be a happy one to you, glorious Hanoum," she said when her eyes met mine.

"Is it late?" I asked.

"The magnificent sun has been at his pleasure-giving task for some time now. My mistress's sister gave me orders not to let the daylight make you heavy with sleep; for you are going out with her before the heat begins. That is why I have been coaxing your spirit back to your body with my song."

"Did you have to coax it long?" I asked, smiling at the Oriental superstition against awakening any one suddenly. They believe that the soul leaves the body during sleep, and wanders in other lands.

"Yes, young Hanoum. It must have gone far away from here, and where the flowers blossom their prettiest; for a pleasant smile was on your lips. Now your body and spirit are together again, and here is your coffee while I go to make ready your bath."

I looked at my watch. It was a quarter to six. In harems one goes to bed early and wakes up early again. Perhaps this is the secret of the beauty of the Eastern women.

As I was sipping my coffee, I remembered that to-day I was to go with Houlmé Hanoum to the meeting of advanced Turkish women.

My coffee finished, and my bath and my toilet, I went to the window to look at the east in its morning glory. A heavy rain had fallen in the night, and the beflowered nature that met my eyes was a very clean and fresh one. It looked like a Turkish Hanoum coming from her morning bath. And this loveliness alone was left from the rain: the thirsty earth had drunk every drop of the water.

As I looked through the latticed window, my eyes roamed first down to the gay Bosphorus plashing at the feet of the fairylike dwellings along its banks; then to the coquettish hills bathed in the morning glow. From the farther view my glance came back to our garden, to be surprised by the sight of two young Turks walking about among the flowers, in that portion allotted to the men. Then I remembered that Selim Pasha had brought a number of guests with him the night before. As I was looking at the two Turks my surprise became delight on recognizing in one of them a friend of my childhood, of whom I had been very fond.

I clapped my hands, and Kondjé came running in.

"Please go down and see if the Validé Hanoum is up yet," I said; "and if she is, ask her if she could receive me."

In a few minutes the slave returned to tell me that the Validé was about to partake of her morning meal, and would consider it an honor if I would join her.

I rushed down to her. "Good-morning to you, Validé Hanoum," I cried, and plunged at once into the reason for my visit, without those flattering and ceremonious approaches that would have been fitting. "You need not grant me what I am going to ask of you, but I should like you very much to grant it."

"Good-morning to you, first rose of a young rosebush," she answered, unvexed by my lack of politeness. "And I shall grant you what you wish, provided that it comes under my jurisdiction. If it does not we shall have to apply to our just master, Selim Pasha, who is again back among us."

I pointed out of the window at the young men walking in the garden. "I want to go and speak to them," I said.

"What?" She threw back her lovely head and laughed her fresh, happy laugh.

"You dear, dear *yavroum!* You are already tired of us women-folk, and want to go and talk with the men."

"Not a bit," I protested. "I would gladly give up the society of ten men for yours, Validé Hanoum; but one of those young fellows is Halil Bey, with whom I used to play when I was a child. Do, please, say that I may go and speak to him!"

"Nay, nay, little pearl, you must not speak to him. He is to be married in two weeks, and I cannot allow any temptation in his way. I might change my mind, however, after we have partaken of some nourishment. You know, *yavroum*, a hungry person sees the world all awry."

As she spoke the slaves were bringing in freshly picked fruit from the orchard, on brass trays on their heads. A small slave also carried a basket charmingly arranged with vine leaves and grapes from the house vineyards — and nowhere on earth do grapes taste as good as those of Constantinople.

All the different fruits were arranged on their own leaves on low tables inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and we ate them without the use of knives. Then one slave brought in a graceful brass basin, while another presented the soap and poured out water for us from a slender brass water-jug. A third handed us embroidered Turkish towels to dry our hands on. Meanwhile, an old slave came in with a brazier, sat down in the middle of the room, and cooked the coffee, while the two young slaves passed the delicious beverage to us with toast and cakes. This was all our breakfast. At its close the Validé turned to the old slave and asked: —

"Nadji, what do you suppose this young Hanoum wants to do?"

The old slave looked at me with her kind, motherly eyes. "The young Hanoum has good taste. I suppose she wants to marry one of our men and be one of us. Indeed Allah, the great and only God, be my witness, but since she has been with us she looks prettier and healthier."

The Validé and I shrieked with laughter.

"No, Nadji, the young Hanoum has not yet come to such a grave resolution. She wants to go and talk with those two young men walking in the garden."

The slave left her embers, walked to the window, and looked critically at the two men. "Mashallah!" she cried, smacking her lips, "but they are two worthy young specimens. The young Hanoum will want to stay among us more than ever."

"Nadji, would you then let her go?"

"It is not for me to decide, but for you, honored head of a most honored household."

"But would it be right, Nadji, to let her go talk to them?"

Nadji looked me straight in the eyes as if to ascertain whether I were worthy.

"She talks to men when she is at home, my beloved mistress."

"Yes," smiled the Validé, "she does. But you know, Nadji, the young Hanoum particularly wishes to talk to Halil Bey, who is to be married in two weeks' time." The Validé's smile was full of mischief.

Nadji examined me again. "It does not matter, my Validé. Halil Bey's mind is filled with the thought of one woman, who is to be his, and whom he has not seen. His fancy is clothing her with wondrous beauty, and no real person can do any harm. Allah is wise as well as great." Her gray head was bowed low at Allah's name.

"I am glad you approve, Nadji; for this young Hanoum here so pleases my fancy that I am likely to spoil her." She turned to me: "Run along, *yavroum*, only be sure to put on your wooden sandals, for there might be some chill left in the earth after the rain. I will notify the young men of the honor you are about to bestow upon them."

A few minutes later I was by the side of the astonished Halil Bey, who, if he ever thought of me, thought of me as in the wilds of America. In his gladness at seeing me again he picked me up, kissed me on both cheeks, and set me down on the bench, to pour into my ears the wonders of the beauty of his unknown bride to be.

"But suppose," I suggested to him, when his enthusiasm at length gave me an opportunity to put in an objection, "suppose when you raise the veil, instead of seeing a beautiful young girl with a slim figure, as you picture her to yourself, you meet a fat, ugly woman, what will you do?"

He laughed at the idea. "But I have seen her in the street and she is slim. And I know she is pretty — my heart tells me so."

Lovers seem to be the same everywhere, even though they are Turkish lovers, supposed by us to be devoid of romantic raptures; and though I stayed some time with Halil Bey, we talked of nothing except the girl who was to become his first and — as he vowed — his only wife.

When I returned to the house several of its inmates shook their fingers at me and sang in chorus, "I saw you!" But the

Validé put a protecting arm around me, and — looking around for the effect it would produce — impressively gave me this invitation:

"*Yavroum*, Selim Pasha wishes me to beg of you to do him the honor to dine to-night with him and his guests."

It was my turn to shake my fingers at the Turkish women, as I challenged them: "Those who do not admit that they would give anything to be in my wooden sandals, let them raise their hands!"

Not a hand was raised, though they might have debated the point further, had not Houlmé run her arm through mine and interrupted with: "Young Hanoum, the sun does not favor those who travel many hours after he has started his journey. Let us start. We have a long way before us, and the day I know will prove interesting."

In my room I was surprised to find a new *tchitcharf* of silver-gray silk. "What is this for?" I asked Houlmé.

"You cannot go to the meeting unless

you have this color on. It is the emblem of dawn, the dawn we are about to bring to the Turkish women's life."

A few minutes later Houlmé and I, in company with an old slave inside the carriage with us, and an old eunuch, who was the shadow of Houlmé, sitting on the box by the coachman, were driving to Hanoum Zeybah's house, where the meeting was to be held. It was half-past ten o'clock when we reached there, and we were the last to arrive. Inside the door stood two gray phantoms, to whom we gave the password, "Twilight."

In a large hall stood the rest of the gray symbols of dawn, all so closely veiled as to be unrecognizable. Without a sound they saluted us in the Turkish fashion; and then we were all conducted to a large room. It was very mysterious and conspirator-like. The nine windows of the room were tightly shuttered, that no ray of unromantic sunlight should fall upon the forerunners of a new epoch. We all sat crosslegged and motionless on a bare settee which ran around two sides of the room. Over our heads hung a banner of sky-blue silk, embroidered in silver with "*Freedom for Women!*" Beneath that hung another of black, bearing the words "*Down with the Old Ideas!*" in fiery red. There were no chairs. The beautiful oak floor was partially covered with Eastern rugs, and on some fat cushions in the middle of the room sat our hostess, the originator and president of the society.

President Zeybah clapped her hands three times and announced that the meeting was about to begin. It did begin, and continued for more than an hour.

The president produced a manuscript with gilt edges from a European satchel at her side, and read her contribution to the club.

"Women, fellow-sufferers, and fellow-workers," she read "we come here to-day to dig a little farther into the thick wall which the tyranny of man has built about us. By nature woman was meant to be the ruler.

By her intuition, her sympathy, her unselfishness, her maternal instinct, she is the greatest of the earth. One thing alone brute nature gave to man — strength! Through that he has subjugated woman. Let us rise and break our bonds! Let us stand up *en masse* and defy the brute who now dominates us! We are the givers of life; we must be the rulers and lawmakers as well. Down with man!"

In this strain, and in a deep voice befitting a ruler and a lawmaker, the president read from her gilt-edged paper, and ended up with the proposition that six members of the club should be chosen by lot to kill themselves, as a protest against the existing order of things. The proposition, which was made in all seriousness, provided, however, — with a *naïveté* that might have imperilled the gravity of a meeting of American women, — that the president of the club should be exempt from participation in the lot-drawing.

This plan for making tyrant man sit up and take notice was received with a murmur from the veiled listeners, rather more of approval than of disapproval. The question, however, was not discussed further at the moment, and the president called on another lady to read her paper.

The first speaker having proved that women were great and were only kept from recognition by the brute force of man, the second one went ahead to prove that women were capable of doing as good work as men in certain cases, by citing George Sand, George Eliot, and others. A third one asserted that women were mere playthings in the hands of men, and called on them to rouse themselves and show that they were capable of being something better.

I was utterly disgusted at the whole meeting. I might just as well have been in one of those silly clubs in New York where women congregate to read their immature compositions. There were totally lacking the sincerity, the spontaneity, and the frankness which usually characterize Turkish women.

When the meeting adjourned, we passed into several dressing-rooms, where the veiled and secret conspirators against the dominion of man all kept luncheon gowns. When the assemblage came together again, the majority of them were corseted and in Paris frocks, and all were quite unveiled, the mystery of the meeting having been mere pretense and affectation. These forty-odd women, ranging in age from seventeen to forty, were drawn from the flower of the Turkish aristocracy. Luncheon was served in a large room overlooking the Golden Horn. We were seated at four round tables, and during the meal the great cause was forgotten, and they were again spontaneous Turkish women.

After luncheon we passed into the reclining room, where Eastern dances and music were given for our pleasure. I was happy to notice that as we lay about on the couches, the Parisian-gowned ladies were distinctly less comfortable than the rest of us. After the music was over, the heavy conversation was started again by our hostess, who was never happy for long unless she considered that she was shining intellectually. She was not yet thirty, but had found time already to divorce two husbands.

"What I like most about American women," she said to me and to her disciples, "is the courage they have in discarding their husbands. Why should a woman continue to live with a man whom she finds to be not her intellectual companion?" Her pose was fine, as she uttered these words, and murmurs of appreciation arose among her hearers.

"Few men are women's companions intellectually," I said, having listened to as much as I could without replying "The only men who are the companions of intellectual women are half-baked poets, sophomores, and degenerates. Normal men, nice men, intelligent men, never talk the tomfoolery women want to talk about. They are too busy with things worth while to sit down and ponder over the gyrations of their souls. In fact, they don't have to worry over their souls at all. They are strong and healthy, and live their useful lives without taking time to store their heads with all the nonsense women do."

Those forty women breathed heavily. To them I represented freedom and intellectual advancement, and here I was smashing their ideals unmercifully. I pretended not to notice the effect of my words, and continued: —

"If you expect real men of any nationality to sit down and talk to you about your souls, you will find them disappointing. As for American women, they are as different from you as a dog from a bird. Whatever they do cannot affect you. They are a different stock altogether. Will you tell me what you are working for specifically?"

"Freedom to choose our husbands, and

freedom to go about with men as we like," the president answered.

"We want to go about the world unchaperoned and free — to travel all over the world if we choose," another answered.

The last speaker was a girl barely eighteen years old, and beautiful with a beauty the East alone can produce. I laughed openly.

"My dear child," I said, "you could not go alone for half a day without having all sorts of things happening to you."

"But that is just what I want," she retorted. "I am tired of my humdrum life, when such delicious things as one reads of in books might be happening to me."

This girl in her youth and simplicity was really revealing the cause of their malady. They were all fed on French novels.

"Even American women, when they are young, do not go about with men unchaperoned as you think," I said, "nor do they travel alone with men, at any age. Of course there are American women who are compelled to go about alone a good deal, because they are earning their own living; but they only do this because they have to. As to what Zeybah Hanoum said about their divorcing their husbands frequently, I am afraid she is looking at American civilization from the seamy side. I do not deny that there are American women who have parted with decency, and whom one divorce more or less does not affect; but the really nice American women have as much horror of divorce as any well-bred European woman."

Zeybah Hanoum here interrupted me. "I beg your pardon, but I have read in the American papers that a woman may divorce her husband in the morning, and marry again in the afternoon. Also, that no other reason for divorce is required than that she does not wish to continue to live with him. It is called 'incompatibility of temper.' I believe" — here the learned lady threw back her head, and turned to the rest of her audience — "that a nation that has such laws has them not for those who have parted with decency, but for the nice women, in order to help them to rid themselves of undesirable husbands. I hear that the courts proclaim that a woman may not only get rid of her husband, but that the husband shall continue to support her. Can you tell me after that that America does not uphold divorce?"

I was rather staggered by her argument, although I knew that fundamentally she was mistaken.

"What you say is true, in a way," I admitted; "but the fact remains that nice American women do not believe in indiscriminate divorcing."

"Oh, well, there are always backward women in every country. I was told by an American lady, once, that not to be divorced nowadays was the exception. And wait till the women have the power to vote. That is the one thing the American men are afraid to grant women, because they know that then women will make laws to suit themselves."

I did not ask Zeybah Hanoum how much farther women could go, with the ballot, than she thought they already had gone, in the home of the free. I was very sorry for the women who were under her influence, because most of them were young and all of them inexperienced, so I took up another side of the subject.

"Let's leave American women alone then, since you will only believe the yellow journalism, and come to your own affairs. Do you really think that by having six women kill themselves you will accomplish anything?"

"At any rate, we shall teach men a lesson."

"And that is?"

"That we are capable of going to any lengths to get what we want. Woman is a power to-day!"

"But do you think you can bring about what you want by violent methods? There are a great many among your men who believe that women should be free to choose their husbands, and to educate themselves as they like. So far you have been given privileges in studying music and art. Little by little other things will come. But remember, that to one woman who thinks as you do there are a hundred who don't."

"They are blind, and we wish to open their eyes. It is our duty — in the name of humanity. We owe this to the Progress of the World," Zeybah announced oratorically.

"Since you have descended to Duty," I said with some heat, "I suppose you are capable of anything cruel and unkind."

At this point a lady — a visitor, like me — who was an instructress in a girls' seminary, though she was the daughter of a rich man, quietly put in: "Zeybah Hanoum, I should like to hear the lady tell us how she thinks it would be wise to proceed. She knows our ways, what privileges we now have, and our shortcomings."

"Yes, yes," several voices cried.

"Since you do not like your system, — although it seems to me admirable on the whole, — it is only right that you should be allowed to live your lives as you want to. Only you must go about it in a sensible way, and take into consideration the others who are involved in it. For example, I should think that you ought to tear down that banner of 'Down with the Old Ideas!' and put up another, reading: 'Respect for the Old Ideas, Freedom to the New!' Then, instead of closeting yourselves together and behaving like imitation French Anarchists, you ought to have your meetings in the open. Since you all wear your veils, you can invite the men who are sympathetic to your movement, to take an interest in it. Little by little, more men will come, and also more women. Really, your troubles are not so serious as those of European women, because under the laws of the Koran women have many privileges unheard of in other countries. The Mussulman system is very socialistic. What you want is to be free to mingle with men. Since you want it, you had better have it, though you are overrating the privilege. There is a great deal of poetry and a great deal of charm in your system; but if you don't like it, you don't like it. You will all be mothers some day; bring up your sons in the new thought, and thus gradually you will bring about the change."

"But you are spoiling our society," the president cried. "What is the object of it if not to push things along fast?"

"I do not agree with you," the quiet lady said. "I believe in what the foreign Hanoum has just said. We ought to go about this in a rational manner."

"Do I understand that you do not approve of our association?" the president asked, bristling up.

"Not in the least; but I do not believe in the bloody demonstration you proposed."

Thereupon arose a discussion which lasted the whole afternoon. The president was vehemently in favor of her plan for having six of the members kill themselves. Most of the others, however, encouraged by the moral support they received from me and from the quiet lady, finally admitted that they did not wish to die. Yet that they would unhesitatingly have committed suicide, had the club decided on the plan, and had the lot fallen to them, I have not the slightest doubt, knowing the nature of Turkish women as I do.

Just as the meeting was breaking up I was very much surprised to have Houlmé come to me and ask me if I should like to meet the young woman whom Halil Bey was to marry in two weeks. I had had no inkling that she was at the meeting, or even that she held advanced views. Naturally I was most anxious to know her, and as it happened that we were going a good part of the way home in the same direction, she invited me to drive with her in her brougham until we came to the parting of the ways. She was a very pretty brunette, with large violet eyes, and such a lovely, kissable mouth — but what a *précieuse !*

"I suppose you are very busy over your coming marriage," I said to her.

"My marriage interests me very little, mademoiselle," she replied coldly. "In fact, I think of it as little as possible. It is not a love-match, you know, but an arranged affair."

"But your future husband is young, handsome, and a well-educated nobleman. I feel certain that you will find in him your ideal."

"Indeed!" she snapped. "So you think that all a man has to have, to be acceptable to a young woman, is youth, good looks, and education?"

"What else?"

"A beautiful mind," she said, as pompously as Zeybah Hanoum herself might have spoken. "I wish my husband to understand the world of Kant and Schopenhauer and all the great thinkers. I wish him to treat me as if I, too, had a mind capable of soaring above the sordid conditions of our daily life. Do you think, when I am married, that I am likely to find in Halil Bey a man to speak to me on these subjects? No! he will tell me that I am beautiful, and that he loves me. As if his paltry love mattered in this great world."

"I should think it would matter to him, and to you."

"Excuse me, mademoiselle, but are you not taking rather a commonplace view of happiness?"

"Perhaps I am. But I might learn to appreciate a high-minded one if it were explained to me."

"I should like a husband who would forget his petty personality, and me as well; who would realize that the greatest love of all is intellectual companionship. The other kind of love is good enough for the inferior class of people, whose only participation in the great world is their part in the perpetuation of the race."

"How do you know that your future husband is not animated by the same noble ideas as you are?" I asked, though I had no such hope myself.

"Quite impossible! Our men are incapable of appreciating such high ideals of life, since they allow their women so little freedom."

By the time I parted from Halil Bey's *fiancée* I was so filled up with high ideals that if Houlmé Hanoum had talked any more in the same line I should have gone mad. "Poor Halil Bey!" I kept thinking to myself.

Once home I had to rush to my room to get ready to dine with the men. The Validé followed me.

"*Yavroum*, what will you wear to-night?"

"Dear me! I have not had time to think of that. I have not a dinner gown with me. I suppose a little white lawn will have to do."

"I have thought all about it, and I have several gowns for you to choose from. As soon as your bath has been given to you, come to me."

In her apartment I found a bevy of women all anxious to help in my attiring. Of all the beautiful clothes displayed the choice fell on a lovely brocade which the Validé had worn in years gone by. With the help of the wives and several of their slaves, and with jewelry enough to start a goldsmith's shop, I was made ready for the extraordinary occasion. When they were through with me I looked as if I were for sale, and said so.

"I do hope, *yavroum*," the Validé said piously, "that you will find your master there."

"*Allah bayouk!*" murmured several women, with bowed heads.

The Validé conducted me to the *mabeyn*, or dividing line between the haremlik and selamlik, where Selim Pasha himself was waiting for me, arrayed in his uniform. The rest of the guests were in European clothes, and after the introductions were over, I told them that a few of them at least would have to approach the Validé for my hand, otherwise she might fear that she had not done all in her power to make me charming.

The dinner was a very interesting one; indeed, I believe it was the most interesting one I have ever been to. Contrary to the opinion of most people who do not know them, the Turks are very attractive men. They are frank, chivalrous, and above all, considerate to women. They also possess a keen sense of humor, and enjoy a joke even at their own expense. They are good talkers, and pretty well informed.

Though it was after eleven o'clock when I returned to the haremlik, all the ladies and slaves were sitting up to see me return from the remarkable adventure of dining with a dozen men.

"Well, *yavroum?*" the Validé said.

"Oh! I think some of them will ask you for my hand. Don't you worry, Validé."

She was beaming with happiness.

"And Validé," I said, after a little more talk, "not to trouble you again, I asked Selim Pasha if I might speak to Halil Bey again to-morrow morning in the garden, and he gave me permission. And since my engagement with him is at half-past eight, I think I will wish you good-night."

The next morning, though I was on time in the garden, I found Halil Bey already there, and very impatient to hear all about his *fiancée.*

"Tell me," he cried out, as soon as we had shaken hands, "is she beautiful?"

"Very," I answered; "but, my poor boy, she is crazy over Kant and Schopenhauer."

"Who are they?" he bellowed, thunder in his voice and fire in his eyes. "Tell me quick, and I will draw every drop of blood from their veins."

"I have no doubt that in a fist-to-fist encounter you would have the best of them, but they are both dead and gone, and only their miserable books are left to fight against."

“Oh!” he laughed, “is that all? I think I can take care of that.”

It was my turn to laugh. “Halil Bey, you have read ‘Cyrano de Bergerac’?”

He nodded.

“You remember what Christian answered when Cyrano was trying to coach him: ‘Et par tous les diables, je saurais toujours la prendre entre mes bras.’ It did not work however. Now, if you want to be happy, listen to me! Devote your time from now till your marriage-day to those two writers. Memorize as much of them as you can. When your bride comes home, and you raise her veil and see her face, be a Spartan. Don't make love to her; don't tell her that she is beautiful. Just talk Kant, recite Schopenhauer, and give her every kind of tomfoolery about your soul that you can think of, provided it sounds highfaluting enough. Buy all the works of Maeterlinck and make her read them to you till she is ready to drop. Tell her that she is to remain for you the ideal companion, the complement of your soul, and any other silly thing that comes into your head. She will help you along; for she has all that at the tip of her tongue. Before a month is over, she will be sick of it and crazy for you. Then fire ahead and make love to her as much as you want to."

Halil Bey looked anything but enthusiastic over the course I had mapped out for him; so I had to repeat most of the conversation I had had with his unknown lady-love.

"I am going to Russia soon," I ended. "I shall be back in about six weeks. Come to my hotel then and tell me all about it."

To leave Selim Pasha's household for a minute: other events more important to me had quite driven Halil Bey and his *fiancée* from my mind before I returned from Russia. I was getting ready to sail for America when Halil Bey came to see me.

"Hallo, Boy!" I said. "How is the *précieuse?*"

"She is dead!" he answered simply.

I stared at him. "Halil! you have not killed her?"

"Not I, but Kant and the other fellow did. And now hurry up; I want you to come and see my little wife. She is waiting for you."

In less than an hour our carriage brought us to Halil Bey's residence, where a very charming hostess was waiting. She threw her arms around my neck and kissed me.

"Mademoiselle, I think you are a happiness-giver."

"And don't you think that his love and your love matter a little in this world?"

"It is the only thing that does matter," she answered, while her violet eyes were looking, not at me but at Halil Bey.

But to return to the Suffragettes. The most noticeable thing about them was that they were attracted only by the worst features of our Western civilization. It was my opinion at that time — although recent political events do not seem to have borne me out — that Turkey would be better off without any influx of European thought.

That the Turks gain nothing from the missionaries we send them is still my firm belief. To begin with, we send them men who are ignorant of the history of Turkey, as of the nature of the Turk, men who are narrow and bigoted. Two of these missionaries, who had for three years been in Asia Minor, came home in the same steamer with me. They were of different sects, and were not on speaking terms with each other.

I was talking with one of them, and found that he hated the Turks as heartily as the Master whose gospel he had gone out to teach commanded us to love one another. There was nothing too bad for him to say about their morals and their religion. I asked him if he understood Turkish.

"No, indeed, I do not. I find their language very much like the people."

How did he manage to talk with the Turks?

"I had an interpreter, an Armenian who was a convert of mine," he explained complacently.

"What was he before you converted him?" I asked, amused. The man was too small to be angry with.

"He was an Armenian, naturally," he answered sharply.

"I thought Armenians were Christians," I ventured.

"Oh, well, their Christianity does not amount to much. We have to teach them the real meaning of the Saviour's words."

"Brotherly love and tolerance?" I inquired, thinking of the other missionary aboard. I received no reply to this, and presently asked: "Did you get to know many Turks?"

"No. They avoided us as if we went there to do them harm. I knew some fishermen and vendors. I only hope that the example of our cleanly lives will help some of them; for we can never preach to them: they will not come to hear us. I shall write a book on Turkey as soon as I am rested."

He was a fair average specimen of the class of men who go to Turkey to educate and uplift her. With few exceptions these missionaries are even ignorant of the fact that Turkey is a country with a great past, and with a literature of its own comparable to that of Greece.

The most discouraging thing about Turkey is that, while the old-fashioned Turk is a man on whose integrity you may depend, as soon as a Turk becomes Europeanized he loses his own good qualities, without obtaining those of the West — exactly as the American Indian does. He is so vitally different from us, and his mind is so naïf and unspoiled, that the result of contact with our sophisticated thought is very harmful. I agree with Houlmé that Turkey ought to work out her own salvation. When she does, I do not believe that she will be found behind any Christian state, on account of the cardinal virtues which the Turkish race possesses. Her religion has as sublime thoughts as ours. That it has kept the race practically abstainers from drink for nearly twenty centuries testifies to its strength.

In my enthusiasm for Turkey I do not wish to be understood as implying that Turkey is perfect, or that all her customs are beyond reproach, or that the Turks do not need "elevating." On the contrary, there are many things about them which to me are hateful, and which I cannot reconcile with their good qualities. One incident which I witnessed in Selim Pasha's household, just before I left it, makes me shudder even now when I happen to think of it. It concerned the pasha's eldest son and his wife, for whose arrival I had been invited to remain a few days longer.

VIII

THE LOVE OF NOR-SEMBAH AND HAKIF BEY

On the day of their arrival we rose earlier than usual to help decorate the house. Roses and lilacs in great quantities were sent in by numerous households of the vicinity. The old family brocades were thrown over the chairs. Silk rugs were gracing the balustrades and bannisters. Big branches of leaves decorated the walls of the vestibule, while pots of gay flowers placed on either side of the staircase added to the generally festive appearance of the house. Also, all the members of the household, from the Validé to the most insignificant slave, were dressed in gala costume.

Immediately after the midday meal, and in spite of the heat, while Selim Pasha's other two wives and I, with their slaves, were drinking cooling drinks, dressed in the thinnest of garments, the Validé and Djimlah and several of their slaves took their seats in the large springless carriage, made comfortable with soft cushions, and went to meet the expected members of the family.

A few hours later the young wife was brought to the house, not in the springless wagon, nor yet in a brougham, but in a sedan chair. The surprise I felt at this was greatly increased by the sight of the young man whom I rightly took to be her husband, walking in the heat by the side of her chair, bareheaded, his fez in his hand, almost as if he were following the dead. I had known that the young wife was ill, but the festive air of the household had deceived me, even though I knew the Turkish custom of putting on their gayest attire at the death of their dear ones. Yet on the countenance of this fezless youth there could be no dissimulation of his sorrow.

Though we were all quite anxious to see the young wife, whose beauty was renowned, we had to be content with the announcement that she would see some of us on the morrow.

That evening, when I went into Djimlah's apartment, I found her nursing the young baby of Nor-Sembah Hanoum, and heard her murmuring these words: "You poor little fading blossom, you dear bedraggled lamb, they even forget you, do they? I will be mother to you, little blossom of Allah."

I sat quietly waiting till the slave should come to take away the baby, after it should be fed, knowing the superstition Turkish women have about being distracted when they are performing this duty of motherhood.

"Djimlah," I asked, when she was at liberty to talk to me, "why were you nursing that baby? Is the mother very ill indeed?"

"Ill!" Djimlah cried; "she is dying. He is killing her."

"Who is killing her?" I asked.

Djimlah's big blue eyes looked at me in surprise and wonder. "Did not the Validé tell you?"

"No."

"Then I must tell you everything from the beginning so that you may understand it right. Hakif Bey — that is the Validé's son — met Nor-Sembah when she was visiting the Validé, who is a distant relative of her mother's. At that time, although she was fourteen and had already taken *tcharchaf*, which made her a woman, she was so frail and childlike that one was apt to regard her as not grown up. Besides, Hakif Bey had always been absolutely indifferent to women, and no one thought any harm could happen if he came into his mother's apartments, as he had always been in the habit of doing. He was devoted to the Validé, and his greatest pleasure was to spend an hour reading to her or talking with her. In these meetings he met Nor-Sembah and fell so violently in love with her that the Validé had to keep the child day and night by her side, for fear of his stealing her and making her his own. It was a very difficult task, since Nor-Sembah was also in love with Hakif and quite hard to manage."

"But why did n't they marry?" I asked. "Was Hakif too young?"

"No, indeed; he was seventeen. The objection was Nor-Sembah's delicate health. She had inherited weak lungs from her family, and her mother and the Validé did not think it wise to let her marry so young. They managed to send Hakif away to Asia Minor in an important position, — for Hakif is very clever and very learned, — and promised him that at the end of a year he could have his bride. I think what kept him quiet for the year was not so much that his position demanded all his attention, — though he acquitted himself brilliantly and the Sultan praised him very much, — as the feverish preparations he made to have a home for his bride. He had a lovely mansion built, with a bath-house as pretty as that of his mother's. He not only furnished the house, but sent to Circassia and bought beautiful slaves and dancing girls. Being the first son, Selim Pasha gave him a handsome allowance, besides what he made as governor. So fervently did he work that at the end of the year everything was ready. Meanwhile the Validé and Nor-Sembah's mother did all they could to make the girl strong. But she was always the same, and the doctor said that, in addition to her illness, the child was lovesick; so when, at the end of the year, Hakif was here claiming her, they married them. You ought to have seen him when he arrived. He was like a hungry wolf. They could hardly keep him out of the haremlik.

"Many months passed after they married and went to Asia Minor, but not a word was heard from them; and finally Selim Pasha himself went there to find out what was happening. When he came back, he said — though he does not give his opinions often — that 'the children were loving each other too much to think of Allah or parents.' You know, *yavroum*, it is not right that mortals should love so fiercely. Evil spirits get jealous and cast the evil eye." Thus said Djimlah, educated in Western literature, yet in her heart as Eastern as any. "If he had loved her less she might have found strength in his love, instead of death. When word came that Nor-Sembah was blessed with Allah's greetings and was about to be a mother, there were tears and cries in two households; for the doctor had said that a child would mean death to the frail mother. Nor-Sembah's father was wild, because she was his only daughter, and he loved her as one loves the blood of one's veins. He stormed and raged and insisted that Nor-Sembah be brought right back to him. But that was impossible, since Nor-Sembah could not be moved; and besides, for nothing in the world would Hakif allow any one to be near her. Zafar Pasha — that is her father — took the doctors that Hakif had sent to Constantinople for and went with them to Asia, and insisted that after the child was born she should be brought here.

"Young people are crazy!" Djimlah, of twenty-four years' experience, interrupted her story to exclaim with scornful emphasis. "Do you know that both Nor-Sembah and Hakif grudge every minute they give to any one except each other? She does not even look at her child. One would say that the glorious sun rises and sets in Hakif Bey."

"But would it not have been better for the girl to have stayed at home, since she had good medical treatment?" I asked.

"It might, if they could have been trusted," Djimlah answered; "but they were brought here because they are going to be separated."

"What?" I almost screamed.

"Yes," Dijmlah said quietly, "they are going to separate them, and I am going to take care of the child and nurse it with my little one."

"To separate them simply because they love each other," I repeated, horrified; "why, it is inhuman."

For the first time during my sojourn in the harems I had to face Oriental barbarism. I almost hated them, and the laws that gave to parents such power over their children.

"It may seem inhuman to you, but it is the only human thing to do, under the circumstances," Djimlah went on, unruffled. "When a man does not know how to love his wife, then the parents have to come in and teach him. Anyway, Nor-Sembah was born to be a fairy, a lily, not a wife. She is a woman's breath, not a real woman. Allah, one spring day, must have made a beautiful dream, and out of that vision must have come Nor-Sembah; but she was never created for the earth. She is so wonderful that you want to pray before her. Wait till you see her, you who worship beauty, and who think that Aïshé Hanoum and I are beautiful."

"But, Djimlah, dear, will he consent to the separation?"

"He will have to. They are going to make him marry a widow slave of about thirty-five. Word has been sent out already to the various harems, and by to-morrow pretty slaves will be coming in."

"But it might kill Nor-Sembah to have him take another wife, since she, too, is so much in love with him."

"No, indeed, because she knows that it is only a temporary marriage. At the end of a year Hakif will be separated from the slave, giving her a stipulated sum of money, and then he will again be given back his wife — stronger by that time, let us hope. That is why they give him a woman of about thirty-five, so that there will be no children to make the marriage binding."

"And will he consent to this most Oriental of arrangements?" I could not help asking.

"He will have to," was the decisive reply. "Everything is arranged. He will either have to do this, or his marriage will be annulled. The old people have seen to everything."

I was so much disgusted that I could hardly keep from telling Djimlah what I thought of the whole arrangement.

"Don't be a sentimental fool, little blossom," she adjured me. "What the old people want to do is to save her and him, if they can. Besides, he must learn to love his wife for her — not for himself alone, as he is doing now."

That night I had the most distressing nightmares. Now I dreamed that I was Nor-Sembah, and again that I was the slave, and sometimes I was both in one. I never welcomed the daylight with more pleasure than I did the next morning. At the same time, I felt for the first time in my relations with the Turks that I was glad not to be one of them.

I was very impatient to see the girl about whose happiness I was so much concerned. After I had had my bath and breakfast, Kondjé told me in a semi-whisper that the Validé invited me to go to her sitting-room.

"Is Hanoum Nor-Sembah there?" I asked.

Kondjé put her brownish hands to her breast and exclaimed: "Oh! honored Hanoum, how you will love her! you, who, like us, love beautiful people so much." She opened her eyes wide, as if to accentuate what she was going to say next, and extended her hands upwards as she did when in prayer. "She is a white jasmine! She is the morning dew on the roses! She is Allah's own prayer!" Kondjé was really so moved at the thought of Nor-Sembah's beauty that she was trembling.

I went down to the garden and carefully chose the prettiest rose I could find, and with my little offering went into the sitting-room.

The Validé rose from her seat near the girl and came over to greet me. First she presented me to the girl's mother, then to the girl herself, lying on her couch, and then to Hakif Bey, who was sitting by the side of his wife, holding her hand.

I went to the couch, took one of the young woman's hands, and kissed it, giving her my rose. She smiled at me, without saying a word. I took a seat near her, and do what I could, it was impossible for me not to stare at her. Djimlah had said the truth, the child seemed to be of divine origin. Her beauty was quite unearthly. I could see how one could become mad for love of her, though she was not really a woman even now, being undeveloped, like a child. Standing up she would probably have been taller than the average, but lying on her couch she looked so fairy-like, so frail! Her skin was so transparent that her veins showed in fine blue lines. Her eyes were very large and almond-shaped, and shaded by jet black lashes. Her nose and mouth were of pure Greek modelling — indeed, there was not one flaw to be found in her appearance. She was dressed in a soft brocade of cream color, embroidered in pale blue flowers.

Though I knew that she was quite ill there was nothing of the sick person about her. Her gown was cut low at the neck in V-form, displaying her delicate throat, which was like the stem of a flower, as the Validé put it. Her wavy, blue-black hair, in two long braids, lay on her breast.

The longer I looked at her the more I realized that what really made her so beautiful was neither her wonderful skin nor the exquisite modelling of her face, but a flower-like candor, and an indescribable purity that emanated from her whole personality.

It has always been a mystery to me that the Turks, who can produce such types of purity as we can hardly conceive of in our Western civilization, should be supposed by us to be voluptuous and sensual. Quite often, in looking at certain children of the Latin and Anglo-Saxon races, I find myself wondering what kind of love could have given them birth, so animal-like are they in expression and deportment. With the ordinary Turkish child it is quite different. Often on meeting a group of them, and especially of little girls, I have stopped and watched them with pleasure, because they looked so pure, so simple, above all so childlike.

One day when I was wondering on this subject, I asked the Validé, with whom I happened to be, whether the children reflected the fathers or the mothers more.

"A child is neither its father nor its mother," she answered me. "Children are either the products of the highest type of love — a divine conception almost — or of an intellectual love almost as high; or else they are mere animal creations, or, lower yet, the results of evil and voluptuous desires."

The Latin races will talk of the sexual relation of men and women in a way to take from it all sanctity, all poetry, all romance. The Anglo-Saxons seldom touch on the subject, for it is something not to be mentioned. The high-minded Oriental, differing from both, will speak of it freely, either with reverence, as one does of religion, or with poetic feeling, as one does of the coming of the spring or the babbling of the brook. It is to him either big and overwhelming, as one's faith toward one's God, or lighter, but very exquisite.

The Validé, that day, while we sat amid the pine trees, spoke about human love with a mysticism and reverence as if she were in the presence of the great Allah in whom she believed so fervently. Whether her ideas were taken from some Eastern book or belief of which I had never heard, or whether they were her own, I do not know.

"When two human beings come together, *yavroum*, some motive brings them together. Generally the motive is love; but love, like every other thing in life, has its degrees. The highest of all is the unconscious offering of one's heart, not to the man or the woman as an individual, but to the man or woman as the earthly incarnation of the deity of love. This is the highest love, and the children that spring from that love must be perfect. This must have been the way we were first created, and the mortal sin which our ancestors committed, I believe, was when they forgot this conception of love and degraded what was once a divine conception into a mere physical relation. However, I believe that we still retain the divine spark within us, and that it may be rekindled, and that the children born from such a perfect love are our perfect human beings. Such a birth must have had our prophet, and your prophet, and all the prophets that have lived in the history of the world.

"But the majority of people marry from motives other than the highest love. If these motives be social or mercenary, the children born from such unions are the indifferent human beings one sees. There are motives even baser, and from these we have the moral and physical cripples. Perhaps this thought may have been in the minds of the ancient Greeks when they condemned the physically crippled children to death. The moral cripples they could not know till they grew up."

This conversation with the Validé came back to me as I was looking in speechless admiration at the exquisite beauty of Nor-Sembah. From my revery the sick girl's voice awakened me. It was the voice one might have expected from such a perfect creature.

"The Validé tells me that if I ask you, you will read me a little of the French poetry."

From under her pillow she drew a volume of Victor Hugo's "Feuilles d'Automne," and thus, thanks to French poetry, I saw a little more of the girl than I otherwise should. While I was reading to her, the young husband sat watching his wife. It might have been my imagination, but I had the feeling that the intensity of his gaze tired her, that had he gone out she would have rested better.

The next day I went to read to Nor-Sembah again, as I had promised. In the sitting-room, on this day, there were the two fathers, in addition to the two mothers and the young husband. I started to leave the room, when I saw them all there, but the Validé and the young wife asked me to stay, and though, afterwards, I would have given a good deal not to have been there, it was my fate to be present at the only disagreeable scene I witnessed during my stay among the harems, and one which seemed to me quite at variance with their great ideas of love.

A buxom, good-looking slave came into the room, magnificently dressed, and offered us some sweets from a tray she was carrying. With the exception of Hakif Bey we all took some, and Nor-Sembah raised her head a little and followed with her eyes the movements of the slave. Hakif Bey not only did not take any sweets, but while the slave was in the room kept his eyes fixed on the garden. Nor did he turn his head once, while slave after slave came into the room on various pretexts. At last, when all had come and gone, like dress models in a Parisian shop, Selim Pasha came up to his son and taking his chin in his hand looked into his eyes.

"As you like, my son, as you like," he said. "If you do not choose for yourself, we shall be compelled to choose for you. As you like, I say again."

Hakif Bey's face was dark with resentment. "Why do you expect me to want another wife, when my heart is filled with one only? I shall do what you want me to: I shall go away — but let me at least go alone. Why must I have another woman?"

"Because her womanly sympathy may make the year of waiting easier for you," the older man said, very kindly indeed. "There is no need, my boy, for your ever seeing her. But the human heart is weak and craves for sympathy. We want to provide against that."

Hakif Bey was about to reply angrily. One could see that from his face, and from the way he drew his head away from his father's hand. But here Nor-Sembah interfered. With a quick movement she laid her head on his shoulder and took one of his hands in hers, while with the other she grasped the older man's robe.

"Father," she implored, "let little Nor-Sembah choose for her lord. It will make her so very happy to find him a good woman who will be near him while she is getting stronger. I will take some days about it, and I will make sure that it is a good woman —but I will do it, father; trust little Nor-Sembah!"

She smiled so sweetly and so bravely that I knew her cause was won. The older man kissed her and left the room.

That afternoon I went with the Validé to a shrine where she was going to pray. With us was only one other slave besides the eunuch. After the prayer was over we went to a little brook to have our luncheon, while the horses were resting. After luncheon the slave lay down under a big tree and went to sleep, and the eunuch drew off a little way, yet keeping us under his protecting eye. The Validé and I took off our shoes and stockings and put our feet in the brook, and then took our work from our bags and began to sew. Thus do the Turkish women often sit for hours at a time.

"What do you think of my boy, Hakif Bey?" she asked, after she had taken a few stitches on her embroidery.

"I think he is a splendid fellow," I answered sincerely.

"Does he look to you as if he could stand his earthly sorrow like a man?"

"Do you mean the cruel separation you are all preparing for him?" I asked, hotly.

"There! there! little one, don't get excited. We are doing our best."

"Suppose," I cried, indignantly, "suppose the girl dies while he is away — what then?"

The Validé laid her work down in her lap, clasped her hands together, and said, ever so quietly: "Nor-Sembah is going to die, little one; the great doctor said so two days ago."

I was choking. "You mean to say that, knowing this, you are trying to send him away with another wife, and not let them be together during her last hours?"

"Though the great doctor said she was going to die, we still cling to the hope of saving her. Sometimes even great doctors can be mistaken. There is *gusel vereni* in the family, and hers developed three years ago.

She was so happy when she first married that for a time the disease seemed to be checked. But the *gusel vereni* came back to her worse than before."

Gusel vereni is a disease that I have only heard of among the Turks. It is akin to our consumption, except that the patient loses nothing of her looks, and quite often seems to grow more beautiful as the end approaches, whence the name, which means "beautiful decline."

Notwithstanding the Validé's reasoning, I still pleaded with her. "Do not send him away, Validé; it might kill him, too."

"But we want to send him away to save him. If he stays here and she dies, he will kill himself. If he goes away, she might get well; and if she does not, we will not tell him for a year. We will take his child to him, and he may learn to love it, and for its sake care for life a little."

"But it is so cruel for her," I still persisted.

"No, no, *yavroum,* she does not suffer. She is earnestly looking for a good woman. She never thinks for an instant that she is going to die. If the end comes, she will not even know it; for it comes very beautifully and quietly, almost always when the patient is asleep. All her family died like this. She has been very happy since her marriage, and all her life has been a sweet-scented spring."

When the day came for me to leave the harem, I was sorry. I wanted to stay and see the outcome of that little tragedy. I only knew Nor-Sembah slightly, but sometimes I wondered if she had not assumed the task of finding a wife for her husband only in order to gain time; or whether it was with the idea that little by little he would get accustomed to the thought and choose one for himself. At any rate, when I left the household to go to Russia, a week or ten days later, the question was not yet settled, although she had seen a number of slaves and had had short talks with them.

حرملك

My journey to Russia was very absorbing. I saw many strange scenes and met many interesting people; yet the Turkish lovers were constantly in my mind. Neither did I forget them on my return to Constantinople in the rush of getting off to America. I wrote a note to the Validé, and sent it by a messenger, who was to wait for an answer. The answer came from Aïshé Hanoum, the third wife of Selim Pasha, who told me that both the Validé and Djimlah were in the Stamboul home, where I could go to see them.

I broke a day's engagement, and set out for Stamboul. When I reached the house, the Validé's eunuch opened the door for me and ushered me in. I found the Validé in her room, but what a difference there was in her countenance! As soon as I saw her I knew that the girl was dead. I threw my arms around her and began to cry.

"Don't! don't, my child! Don't go against Allah's wishes. Maybe they are happier than we know. Kismet!"

"They!" I cried.

"Sit down there, and I will tell you." In a voice which was dry from pain, and absolutely colorless, the Validé told me the end of the lovers.

"She only lived two weeks after you went away. Allah took her to him very gently, and Hakif was at her side. He was very quiet and dutiful. He went about the place and chose a grave for her. She was fond of the sea and the pine trees, and he bought a piece of land with pines overlooking the Bosphorus. There they put her to sleep, and Hakif came quietly home. That night it rained hard and there was a summer storm. Hakif, in the middle of that stormy dark night, and while every one was in his own room, perhaps thought of the lonely little grave at the foot of the pine trees overlooking the Bosphorus. Perhaps her spirit came for him and called him to her. He saddled his horse himself, and went to sit with his wife in her new home.

"Early in the morning the gardener found the horse, without rider, outside his door. We hunted for Hakif everywhere. Then his father and I went to the little grave by the sea. There, lying on her grave, was Hakif, quite, quite dead."

"He killed himself?" I whispered.

"No! no! *yavroum.* The doctor said that after he was drenched by the rain, he probably fell asleep on the grave, and a chill killed him — but I know. Allah, in his supreme clemency, took him to his heart, and gave him back his bride, now cured from all earthly ills. And now by the foot of the pines, overlooking the Bosphorus, there is no longer a solitary little grave; for there is another that keeps it company."

This was the end of the two lovers, whose love was the cause of their death. Often I find myself dreaming of them, when heaven's lamp burns low, and when the imagination roams into the realm of the world beyond. Is she an houri now? and has he become pure as the first man whom God created? and are they walking together in the Garden of Eden, if that is now above? It is unfortunate that some one will always come in to light the lamp, when one's thoughts have gone farther and farther away, until almost one has reached the river over which the soul alone may go. But in the dusk the lights must be lighted, and the wandering thoughts are brought back from the boundary which divides this world from that which is to come. The little boat with Charon waiting in the stern resolves itself into a morris chair; and the angel who was ready to divest my soul of my body emerges from the gloom as a bookcase, while the angel's flaming copper-colored hair is only the back of some brilliantly bound book. And of all the musings there only remains the thought that some day I shall cross the river which the lovers have crossed, and that then I shall meet again my beautiful Nor-Sembah, and know the fate of the lovers.

IX

A DAY'S ENTERTAINMENT IN THE HAREM

The next to the last day of my visit to Djimlah Hanoum was to be devoted to a bath-party in my honor. This had been promised me before Nor-Sembah arrived, and the Validé would not give it up even after she saw how really ill her daughter-in-law was. The Orientals have a sense of hospitality far greater than ours. No sorrow or trouble of their own must interfere with the discharge of their duties as hosts. And although we all felt the approach of the great unavoidable one, who comes at the predestined time to take our dear ones to a better world, still they never considered relinquishing the party they had promised to give me.

It was to be an all-day affair, and the inmates of several of the harems in the vicinity had been invited. That morning the plaintive sound of the Albanian flute woke me up very early. From the platform on which my bed was made I could see the shepherd in his quaint clothes mounting the hill, behind his flock. It was so early that the light was grayish, and the hills half lost in a violet haze. So quiet was the world that the *prat! prat! prat!* of the sheep's feet, advancing to the tune of the flute, was quite audible.

I left my platform and went to the window. How different life seemed to me through this latticed window from what it had seemed only a short time before in New York! As I watched the day creeping across the Bosphorus from Asia, I thought of the course of my life during the past six years. I had worked with the Americans, studied with them, and learned to think their ways. And after six years of hurrying, of striving as if life counted only by the amount of work done, of knowledge acquired, I was back again in the calm leisure of Turkey, where eternity reigned, and no one hurried. Not to stay, for I fear that he who tastes of American bustle can never again live for long without it. Yet as I stood at my window I was happy—happy to have nothing to do—happy merely to live for the pleasure of living.

Everything around me breathed peace and contentment. Among the Orientals I am always overwhelmed by a curious feeling of resigned happiness, such as the West can hardly conceive of. I was talking about the Turks, lately, with some very intelligent American men, and it was only then I fully realized the impossibility for the Occidental mind, and especially for the active and restless American mind, to comprehend the Turkish temperament.

"You cannot convince me," said one of my American interlocutors, "that human nature is different in Turkey from what it is in America."

But that is exactly what is, in a measure, the fact. And to be able to judge the Orientals one has, like me, to be born among them, to live their life for a time, and to breathe the air of contentment that fills their homes.

Nowhere is the idea of the greatness of the Deity felt as among the Orientals. When they tell you that God is great, and that God alone knows what is good for you, you believe it. We, on the other hand, believe that it is for us to choose our course, to take the initiative. God with us is only a coadjutor: "God helps those who help themselves," as our proverb teaches us from infancy.

A breeze shook the graceful mimosa trees beneath my window. The soft, penetrating perfume of that essentially Oriental flower rose, and brought to my mind the remembrance of my first meeting with Djimlah, before either of us was in her teens. It was on the Bay of the Bairam. I had gone with my father to pay a series of calls on Turkish dignitaries. In one place we were received in an immense garden, where we were refreshed with sherbet and given little baskets of sweets to take home with us. My father and our host became engaged in a political discussion; and I, feeling myself unobserved, trotted off exploring. Presently I came upon a grove of mimosa trees. I wanted some of the flowers. They were just out of reach. I could have climbed the tree, but I had been told that I should have to be careful of my frock, if Papa were to take me with him. As I stood there, longing, a little girl spoke to me in Turkish: —

"Would you like to have some of those flowers?"

"Yes, but I cannot reach them. Can you?" I asked. She was taller than I.

"I cannot reach them either." She scrutinized me, and added: "You are a Frank child, are n't you?"

I drew myself up, my blood boiling. One has to be born in Constantinople to understand what the word means to us. By it we designate the mongrels who are neither of the Greek nor Turkish faith, and whom one of our poets characterized as the bastards of the Orient.

"I am no Frank," I cried. "I am a Greek, which is a greater race than yours."

In Turkey we learn early to defend our nationality. Perhaps that is the reason why the good Greek stock comes from there.

In a friendly tone the little girl responded: "It is nice to be a Greek, and not a Frank. But your race is not so great as mine. This is my country, not yours."

I was only eight years old, but I had been brought up on the wonders of Greece, and knew all the glorious deeds of the heroes of '21. I glared at the little girl. She was a Turk, taller and stronger than I, but I was not afraid of her.

"You have only had this country a few hundred years," I shouted. "It was mine before it was yours. My forefathers ruled here when yours were savages. Constantinople is mine, by rights, not yours — and what is more I can lick you."

I took a step towards her, full of militant design.

She shook her head. "This is my grandfather's garden; you are under our roof: it would not be polite to fight you." Oriental children learn the holiness of hospitality as early as Greek children learn of their past glories. "I saw you come in with your father, and when you came this way, I came, too, to make friends. You can have some mimosa — all you like."

"I cannot reach it," I said, still sullen.

"You can climb up on my back and get it."

She leaned over against the trunk. I scrambled up on her back, and picked many of the flowers. I offered her a few.

"You may keep them all," she said; "they are yours."

I was relenting, but not very rapidly. I should have liked to be friends, had she not reminded me that her race had defeated mine.

We, from the still enslaved parts of old Greece, are born with that sore spot in our hearts. When it is touched it hurts.

"I will give you my basket," she went on, holding out her little hand. "It came from our Patissah's palace. The candy in it is lovely."

I took her hand, and soberly we walked about the garden together.

"My name is Djimlah," she volunteered presently, "and yours?"

I told her.

"I like you very much," she went on. "And you?"

Before we reached the place where my father was still deep in politics, we had forgotten the differences with which our friendship had begun. She climbed up on her grandfather's knees, and begged him to persuade my father to let me stay with her for a few days.

The old pasha was an influential man: my father was a Turkish subject. I stayed.

That night Djimlah and I slept in the same little bed, on the floor of her grandmother's room. It was my first introduction to a harem. After that I often stayed with her, and came to know other Turkish girls, and visited other Turkish harems. Notwithstanding our different nationality and faith, Djimlah and I became fast friends. Neither time nor separation made us forget each other.

While I was lost in my reminiscences, shepherd and sheep had disappeared over the purple hills; and gradually I became aware that other sounds were replacing the melody of the flute that had passed beyond my hearing. Outside my door there was the soft padding of bare feet, now approaching, now receding, as if in suppressed excitement. I clapped my hands, and Kondjé rushed into the room.

"What is happening, child?" I asked.

Kondjé smacked her lips, and salaamed profoundly. "They are preparing for the bath-party, glorious Hanoum, which they are to give to-day in your honor." Another salaam. "Houri of Paradise, if you will let me dress you now, and bring you your coffee, you may be ready to see the guests arrive," she said in coaxing tones.

"Kondjé, my dear, I am just as anxious to see their arrival as you are, so make haste."

While I was drinking my coffee, Kondjé again whirled into my room, like a leaf in a hurricane, and cried: —

"Most glorious one! my heart's own little one! [She was at least six years younger than I.] Light of my pupils! I have just seen a speck of dust over the hilltops. That can only be the arriving guests."

She flashed before my eyes a yellow silk gown. "See! I brought this for you. It will make your beauty look as tender as the bloom of a ripe peach."

Without more ceremony Kondjé started dressing me. When I was ready, she inspected me critically and decided that with some red beads around my throat and hair I should be as attractive as a beautiful pomegranate — disregarding the fact that a moment before I was to be a peach. She rushed from the room and returned in a minute with the desired ornaments.

"Where did you find them, Kondjé?" I asked.

She made a face at me, gave me two kisses on each cheek, and ordered me to keep still. Only one thing troubled her.

"Baby mine, Allah's little flower, won't you let me put a little black on your eyebrows and lids, and throw a little gold dust on your hair? Ah! but you would be wonderfully beautiful then."

"Kondjé, you may do anything else you like with me; but you are not to put any black about my eyes."

She rushed over and gave me an imploring hug. "Dear one, don't you know that Allah wants people to look their prettiest? You know that at the entrance to Paradise husbands are asked first of all whether they have kept their wives provided with the proper number of black pencils for their eyebrows!"

"As I have not a husband to be bothered about it at the gate of Paradise, I think that I will get along without them," I parried. "But you may dye my finger-nails red, after the bath."

Kondjé fell to the floor, grabbed her bare toes, and rocked back and forth, laughing till the tears flowed from her eyes. "Oh! I do love the way you say things," she gasped. "You said I might chop your fingers off, when really you meant that I might put color on them."

Having failed in the matter of putting black about my eyes, Kondjé — when her amusement over my Turkish was exhausted — contented herself with the golden powder for my hair, and then stood off and studied me from every point of view, to see if she had not overlooked some hidden charm, which might be brought out. I do not know how long she would have kept this up, had not the sound of music come to our ears. At this she bounced into the air like a rubber ball, and before I knew what was about to happen, she picked me up and threw me on her back like a sack of meal, and ran through the halls with me as if my weight were nothing. She deposited me on the little indoor balcony of the vestibule, dropped to the floor, and panted at her leisure.

"Kondjé!" I remonstrated, "you must not treat me as if I were a baby."

She rose up till her fiery black eyes were on a level with mine. "You are a great deal more of a baby than I am!" she declared, "though I am not yet sixteen,—and besides, you have n't a husband."

"Neither have you," I snubbed back.

Her face took on a droll expression. She batted her eyes mischievously, and brought her mouth close to my ear. "I am going to have one when the leaves fall," she whispered.

"Who is he, Kondjé?"

"You dined with Selim Pasha — yes?"

I nodded.

"You saw a big handsome man there, standing by the door, seeing that everything was right — yes?"

I nodded again.

"Most beautiful — hey?" She smacked her lips and half closed her eyes.

"I think he is, Kondjé."

"I shall be his. He has even seen my face and touched my hand. I am to live in the little cottage on the hill, so as not to be far from my mistress."

Before Kondjé's confidences had come to an end, the other members of our household, dressed in gala costume and preceded by the Validé, came down the stairs and filled one side of the hall. The wives with their children were in the first row, and the slaves behind. Two dancing-girls, holding baskets full of flowers, on their bare shoulders, stood by the door, and several African eunuch boys were near them with brass trays filled with the petals of roses.

As the guests entered the hall the flower-petals were thrown over them. One by one the new-comers ranged themselves on the opposite side of the hall. When all were in place, the salutations began. Down to the floor went all the heads, to be raised gracefully, and to go down twice more. Then music burst forth, and the ladies of the different harems embraced one another. Their wraps were taken off, and they were conducted to the sitting-room to drink coffee. There I was presented to them.

"Here is our little one," said the Validé. "She is leaving us to-morrow to flutter farther on her way. She has not yet found her golden cage." She put her hand on my head. "My little one, there is no happiness except in a prison where the jailer is the lover and the life-giver."

The guests applauded these words, and some came over and kissed me. I was especially attracted by a certain woman, whose type I had never met in flesh and blood before. To say that she looked like a Rossetti painting would be doing her scant justice, yet it was of the Blessed Damosel I thought when I saw her.

I crossed the room and went to her. "You speak French?" I asked.

She took my hand in both of hers, leaned forward and kissed me several times on the eyes. "So I do, little one."

Our talk was trivial, but the woman became more and more interesting to me. Abruptly she said at length: —

"You will come and spend a day or two with me."

"I am sorry, but I can't," I answered. "I am going to Russia in a few days, and have things that I must attend to."

She put her arm around my waist. "Never mind, you must come to me for a night, at least. I came here to-day especially to arrange about it. I had heard so much about you, and I am in trouble and need your help."

The entreaty in her voice, and the hint in her words carried away my imagination, and regardless of all duties I found myself pledged to go to her on the following night.

A bevy of slaves, attired in the lightest of diaphanous garments, now entered the room, and salaaming with forehead to floor announced: "If the honorable company is ready, so is the bath-house." And to the sound of music they accompanied us to it.

It was a coquettish little building, fairy-like in its arrangement, and was a monument to the love of Selim Pasha for his first wife. I was told that he had seen to every detail of it himself, and that only when it was completely finished had he conducted his bride to it. Though a separate building, it was connected with the main house by a glass corridor, heavily curtained. We entered a large marble hall, with a big fireplace, wherein the coffee was always made. The walls of the hall were composed of small pieces of marble, of different colors, in various patterns, so that at first sight they looked as if covered with pale Oriental rugs. The hall was three stories high, to the roof, and the ceiling was decorated with a row of dancing cupids. Ten marble steps, running the whole width of the room, led up to a raised landing, whence windows looked into the garden. From this landing, slender marble columns supported a balcony, from which the dressing-rooms opened, on the second floor. Rich rugs, and brocade hangings, and mirrors on doors and ceilings, made the bath-house stunning. In the dressing-rooms the colors were reds and browns, giving a curiously autumnal effect.

When we went to our dressing-rooms my little Kondjé took possession of me, and after making me ready for the bath, threw over my shoulders a lovely *pestemal*, a big soft white towel with yellow stripes of thick silk running through it.

"This, most honored Hanoum, is for your greatness, from the Validé, honored and beloved first wife of Selim Pasha, the Magnificent. As you are the guest of the party," she explained, "all the ladies will give you presents."

She took down my hair, braided it in two braids, and arranged it on top of my head, fastening it tightly in a head-kerchief of pale yellow silk, the edge of which was trimmed with silver thread.

"This, honored Hanoum," Kondjé announced again, "is for your greatness, from the second wife of Selim Pasha, the Magnanimous."

She took from a little box a chain with two coral pendants, and placed it around my forehead. "This, honored Hanoum, is for your greatness. It comes from Aïshé Hanoum, third wife of Selim Pasha, the Wonderful."

She stepped back a few steps to survey me, her head on one side; smacked her lips with satisfaction, and salaamed. "Now, honored Hanoum, you may proceed, and I, the humble one, will follow."

As I came out of my room several other *pestimal*-covered ladies, barefooted and barearmed, emerged from theirs, and we salaamed most profoundly, as if attired in the most formal manner, before we went downstairs. There, Djimlah — as Kondjé would have put it, fourth beloved wife of Selim Pasha, the Generous — greeted me and presented me with a pair of *takouns*. They were of carved oak, and the leather straps which fastened them to my feet had my monogram on them in silver.

The heads of the other households also gave me various trinkets, mostly charms against the evil eye; and amid the singing of slaves we went into the bathing-room. The sight that greeted us when the door was opened was beautiful in the extreme. The marble rooms were decorated from floor to ceiling with laurel, and the marble settees, in the middle of the rooms, were masses of color, being covered with flowers, in pots.

We passed in through a human lane of slaves, who relieved us of our *pestemals;* and thus, *chaussées*, *coiffées*, *mais pas habillées*, we entered, leaving outside all self-consciousness; and soon the splashing of the water, the singing of the slaves, and the laughter of all filled the huge resounding rooms with the gayest of noise.

Each lady was in the hands of her slave, and my little Kondjé was droller than ever. In her flowery Oriental language she invested me with all the beauties of the world. The Venus of Milo was nothing in comparison with me, whose size is that of a Jap. While she was bathing me she kept on repeating, "Mashallah! mashallah!" lest some *djinn* or *ev-sahib*, seeing my beauty, might be tempted to cast an evil eye on me.

The temperature of these rooms was 170°, yet we stayed in them for hours, oblivious of the heat. After an hour, the flowers withered, and were removed; the settees were washed, and light refreshments brought in. Near the end of our stay a regular cold luncheon was served, and I may say here that the cold dishes prepared for "haman" are worthy of poetry for their description. We sat on the settees as we ate, with a slave on each side: one to pass us the new dishes, the other to take away those we were through with.

Luncheon over, our *pestemals* were thrown over us and we passed out of the hot rooms into the cooling-rooms, where, as we lay on the couches, the slaves covered us with heavy burnouses. A new pleasure was awaiting us here. While we had been bathing, the reclining-room had been decorated with leaves and flowers, in the form of numerous arches. Under these we lay on snowy sheets and pillows, wrapped in our silk coverlets, while our hair was taken down and rubbed with rose-petals, before being tied up in soft, absorbent towels. Next came the dyeing of eyebrows, and lashes black, and of finger-nails crimson; and, last of all, the flower-bath.

The heavy hangings were now lowered over the windows, till the light was dim, and then to the sound of a low, murmuring song we fell asleep and rested till late in the afternoon. Immensely refreshed we woke up, dressed, and went out on a hill to watch the setting sun. The Turks are not sun-worshippers, but to miss a sunset with them is almost as great a misdemeanor as to omit praying when the muezzin calls the faithful to prayer from the top of the minaret.

That night, after dinner, we had our third pleasant surprise when the Validé presented to us the world-famed story-teller, Massaljhé-Hiran. She salaamed to us with as much dignity as does Paderewski before he takes his seat at the piano. She was dressed in dark red silk, embroidered with green leaves. Her hair was braided, arranged on top of her head, and surrounded with a green silk head-kerchief, on which patterns were worked in garnets. Her face, long, thin, and sallow, was very pale, accentuating a pair of large black eyes, which were made to look larger yet by black pencilling. Her lips were dyed brick-red. A pair of earrings, so long as to touch her shoulders, gave a barbaric aspect to her Eastern face. Her sleeves were of fleecy material and quite loose, her arms being covered with ancient bracelets. Her hands, interesting-looking rather than pretty, were literally covered with rings, — presents, mostly, from the powerful of the land.

She took her place in the middle of the floor, removed a pair of embroidered red slippers from her feet, and sat down cross-legged on a cushion. All the ladies and slaves sat around her in the form of a semicircle. A few among those present had heard her before, but most of us knew her only by reputation. In the attitude of that small audience there was a worshipfulness that strongly affected me. I felt that I was in the presence of genius.

" Good-evening, honorable company," she said, touching the floor with her fingers, and then kissing them to us. Her voice had something of the same quality as Sarah Bernhardt's, only it was on a much lower key.

She began her story with a description of a stormy night. Presently the woman next me shivered, and unconsciously I drew a scarf around me, before I realized with a smile that we were in a warm room. The story she told was her own; it was on the same theme as that of Francesca da Rimini, or Tristan and Isolde, but with Oriental accessories, and a different ending. It related the fate of a young and beautiful Persian princess, who, while on her way to become the bride of a king, fell in love with the courtier who had come to take her to her lord. Princess Yamina, on discovering that the man who was conveying her to be the bride of the king had become master of her spirit, had her tent put up, retired into it, and placed around her couch twelve of her young maidens, making thus of chastity and purity an insurmountable barrier. She lay there, praying to Allah for strength, and taking only enough nourishment to keep the breath of life in her frail body. When, once a day, it was necessary for her to receive the King's envoy, she sat erect, fortified by her maidenly pride, while Love's tyrannical hand was tearing at her bleeding heart. In two days she was strong enough to continue her journey. When she arrived at the castle and was received by the King, an elderly benevolent man, she prostrated herself before him and told him the truth.

"'Kill me, my master,' she moaned, 'since I was not capable of bringing to you intact the heart of your future wife. Pierce with cold steel the body that is not worthy of your love, but do not touch it even as you might that of a slave; for it is polluted by thoughts of love for another.'

"She lay there waiting to be slain. A side-door opened without noise, and the young courtier entered — he who had stolen the heart and the thoughts of the prostrate princess. He advanced into the middle of the room and stood there with his arms crossed on his noble breast. The princess raised her head, saw him, and rose to her feet, no longer trembling. She was the woman, now, protecting her heart's lord.”

The narrator paused and glared at us. She was for the moment the woman animated by more than the instinct of self-preservation — by the savagery of the woman defending the man she loved. Her voice, when she spoke, sounded thick: I felt as if I were in a thunder-storm.

“‘Do not strike him, my master, he is innocent! It is I who must pay the price — I the guilty one. It is not his fault that Allah made him so beautiful and noble that no woman could help loving him. Kill me!’ she cried. ‘Give me the most cruel death, but spare him!’”

Massaljhé-Hiran was kneeling on one knee.

She begged and implored, and we saw the princess herself passionately trying to save the life of her lover.

In the end it turned out that the young courtier was the King, and all ended happily. Such was the nervous pitch to which Massaljhé-Hiran had wound us up, however, that many were sobbing when she ended, and I suddenly became conscious that the tears were trickling down my own cheeks. Moreover, my muscles had become so rigid, in the intensity with which I had followed her story, that they actually pained me when they became relaxed. Only on one other occasion have I had the same feeling, and that was when Henry Irving, as Robespierre, faced the ghosts.

However, the Orientals seldom allow one set of artificially produced emotions to dominate them, and after the story-telling was at an end, dancing-girls glided into the room, and, to the sound of gay music, completed the day's entertainment.

Thus ended my visit to Selim Pasha's hospitable household, though not my experiences with Turkish women. In my last visit I was to hear a story, and to play a part in it, which I know must seem almost incredible to those who do not understand Turkey.

Djimlah, Houlmé, and Aïshé Hanoums, with a retinue of slaves, came down to the shore of the Bosphorus, where my unknown lady's little *caïque* was awaiting me, to see me off. I was sorry to leave them, and said so.

"Why not stay with us," suggested Djimlah hopefully; "marry one of our men, and know happiness?"

I shook my head. Why I might not, I did not know; except that, although the Greeks may love and respect the Turks, may live side by side with them, there must always exist that antipathy of the blood to remind us that they are our conquerors, and that sometime we must drive them from our land in order that the priests may finish the holy *litourghia*, and our statues may no longer be cold in exile.

Yet I bade my Turkish friends farewell with a full heart and silent tears. I jumped into the waiting *caïque*, the *caïksti*, in his silky *bembazar*, pulled at his oars, and we were gone.

X

A FLIGHT FROM THE HAREM

As the boatmen rowed me swiftly from one bank of the Bosphorus to the other, and then along to the Seraï Bournou, I gazed at the illuminated city which displayed itself before my dazzled eyes. It happened that Constantinople was making herself beautiful that summer night, to celebrate the anniversary of her ruler, the Commander of the Faithful.

Near and far the slender minarets were covered with microscopic, many-colored oil lamps, in various designs, the half-moon being the favorite. The balconies of the houses of the wealthy were playing the same tune, on a lower key, as the tall minarets, while the banks of the most beautiful river in the world were masses of lights. The city was alive; the harbor was filled with ships adorned with strings of lanterns from mast to mast; and the horizon was ablaze with fireworks. One would say that even the sky partook of the festivities: its deep indigo was picked out in golden stars, while a silvery moon was gazing coquettishly at the thousands of half moons that strove to reproduce her grace.

Arrived at the house of my Rossetti lady, a slave took charge of me; and when I was bathed and perfumed, and dressed in soft, Oriental clothes, I was left to my own devices. I crouched on the low divan by my window and peeped through the lattice at the splendors outside.

The door of my room creaked, and as the light from the hall shone in I saw that it was my hostess who had entered.

"*Os-geldi! Os-geldi!*" she called out. Her two outstretched hands got hold of mine, and she drew me to her bosom. "My little blossom, what are you doing here in the dark? Are you helping Allah to weave garlands for your romances?"

"I was looking at the beauty outside."

"Nay, my little jasmine, from the tone of your voice I know that you were in dreamland. Some time dreams will be made true; and may they come true in your life."

There was a pathos in her voice that I had not detected at our previous interview. Rossetti's poem came back to me, and I said aloud, gazing at her beauty: —

> "Her body bore her neck as the tree's stem
> Bears the top branch; and as the branch sustains
> The flower of the year's pride, her high neck bore
> That face made wonderful with night and day."

"Why do you say those lines?" my hostess asked.

"Because you make me think of them."

"Do you mean that I look like Rossetti's paintings?"

"I rather think you look like his poems: you are the embodiment of them."

"And am I this to you?"

"Yes, you are this to me. Ever since I first saw you I have been drawn to you. By rights I ought to be somewhere else to-night, but I am with you. It was of you I was thinking when you came into my room. Do you know, I do not even know your name. That does not matter, though, for to me you are my Rossetti lady."

The Turkish woman sat on the divan, near me, her fingers playing with my loose hair.

"You are a sweet-scented little bride," she said irrelevantly. "Where is the bridegroom, little one?"

"Your slave just gave me a heliotrope bath," I explained; "and as for the bridegroom, I am afraid his grandsire died heirless."

"*Yavroum*, you are a very dear person, and I hope some day you will know the joy of being a wife." She was silent for a long time, and then asked, suddenly: "Shall I tell you why I insisted so strongly at the bath-party that you should come to see me?"

"Then it was n't because you liked me?"

"Yes, indeed, dear little flower of the

pomegranate tree. The minute my eyes met yours I knew that I liked you, and I knew that you belonged to us Oriental women. That is why I asked you to come. I wanted to ask you to do something for me, something which I can only trust to few; and if I come to you with my troubles the first minute of your being under my roof, it is because I do not want you to feel that after you have broken bread with me you will be obliged to do what you would not wish to. I will tell you everything, and if when you have heard me you wish to go away and forget me, the little boat you came in is waiting for you."

My pulse quickened. What could she be going to ask me to do?

"*Yavroum,*" she went on, "before I tell you anything, do you know where this dwelling of mine is?"

"No, you asked me to meet the boatman so late that I scarcely know in which part of the country it is."

"I am very glad. I want you not to know, for your own sake."

Every word she spoke seemed to add to the romance of the situation. I was to learn the story of my Rossetti poem, and I felt sure that it could be nothing less than a wonderful love story. Bits of all the Oriental tales I knew came thronging to my mind. I was afraid to utter a word, lest I should break the spell and she should withhold her confidence from me. In my sojourn among the Turkish women I had always been expecting to come across some wonderful, out-of-the-common romance; but their lives, when seen near at hand, were generally as uneventful as the most conventional Western life. Now, at length, I felt that I was to learn of one that would come up to my expectations.

"I was once a very beautiful woman," my hostess began in the simple, un-self-conscious manner of the East.

"Mashallah! are you not now?" I cried. "I would give my soul to look like you."

She smiled.

"Yes, I know I am good-looking still; but a woman nearing thirty is not the same as at twenty; and when I was twenty I was very beautiful indeed. I was born and brought up in Asia Minor, where my father was a governor. My maternal grandmother, a woman of advanced ideas, sent a French lady to educate me, when I was only three; and when I was fifteen, and my mother died, I was brought to Constantinople and married to my husband, who is ten years older than I am. Three children were born to us, and my life ought to have been very happy. And it would have been if my head had not been full of French stories. I read all the time, and it made me feel that I, too, had the right to be a heroine.

"One day, when I was twenty years old, I was going from my home to Foundokli in my little *caïque*. It was a hot afternoon and I had my *feredjê* thrown back a little, and only had my veil around my face, not over it.

In mid-stream we met another *caïque* in which was a young foreigner. When he saw me, he cried something aloud in his own tongue, and from his look I knew that it was of me he spoke. So I drew my veil close over my face and brought the *feredjé* around me. This did not discourage the man, however, and he ordered his *caïque* to follow mine. It was a very dangerous thing he did, and had my eunuchs been with me there would surely have been trouble.

"He followed us to where we were going, and then went away, apparently thinking that that was my home. Two days later I had partly forgotten the incident, though I did think a good deal of the man and his good looks, when his boat happened to meet mine again. He exclaimed, this time in French: 'At last I have found her!'

"I don't need to go into particulars, but the man did everything in his power to come into my life. My husband was away at the time, and I was alone, and lovesick, perhaps.

The foreign man managed to send me letters. At first I resented his writing to me, and would hardly read them; but he was very young and handsome, and he wrote me such letters as they write in books, and my head became so turned by the romance of it that some months after the time he first met me, I left my husband, my home, and my babies, and went with him."

My Rossetti lady had been telling me her story in such a quiet, restrained voice that at first even this climax did not seem startling.

"Have I told you that he was an Englishman, and what they call a lord in his country? He took me to Scotland, and there married me. The first three years went like a dream. He did not keep me behind latticed windows, but he kept me under closer watch than I had ever been before, and guarded me as if he could never be sure of me; though I was constantly in society and saw a great deal of that world which had always been such a mystery to me. I don't know whether I loved him during those three years or not. All I can say is that my life was like a picture-book whose leaves were turned very fast. He took me to his mother. He was an only son, and she was very kind to me. I do not think that besides his mother any one knew that I was Turkish. He took me to his court, and I met his queen; and we went from one place to another all over Europe. He was very rich and liberal, and everywhere we went I had a house of my own, but I was always a prisoner.

"It was in the south of France that my baby was born. To think that Allah could bless such a union with his most wonderful gift!" she cried, clasping her hands to her heart. "It was a little girl, and Edgar named her Hope, because he said she was the hope that I at last belonged to him entirely.

"When they put the baby into my arms I knew why Allah had sent her to me. It was like the breaking of a spell, the lifting of a veil from my clouded vision, and I saw my past life, my husband, and my babies loom up as if from another world. From that minute I had no peace of mind. Whether asleep or awake there was only one thought with me: my husband. I began to remember all the little things he had done and said to me, and gradually I began to worship him. I wanted him as I never knew before that one human being could want another. And all that time I was loved, almost devoured, by the man who had taken me away from my home. I could not bear it. I began to plan and plan how I might go back to my own people and my own country.

"When, as a girl, I had read about European life it had seemed to me so attractive, so wonderful. But when I came to taste it, it was empty and bitter. European women have no friends, as we understand them. They have no leisure hours to think and to dream, and to come to know themselves and their God. They do not even have time to take care of their children; and nurses, with whom they would not for anything in the world associate themselves, are intrusted with the sacred duty of forming their children's minds. Indeed there is nothing sacred in a European woman's life, — at least, *yavroum*," she modified her statement, "not in the lives of the women I have seen. Do you know, little bride of the river, that though Edgar had kept me so close to him, lots of men had told me things they had no business to tell me. Oh! I was sick of it all. Not once in all those dreary years had I met with people who said, 'If Allah wishes it,' 'If it is the will of Allah.' But I prayed and prayed to my great Allah to let me return to my own people. And he heard my prayer.

"We were in Scotland, and an uncle of Edgar's died, leaving him an estate and money. Edgar had to go, and could not take me with him because I was ill. As soon as he went out of the house I took pen and paper and poured my whole heart out with it, and sent it to my husband. I implored him to take me back, even if he now had other wives; to give me just a little corner, from which I could watch him and be near him.

"I sent the letter, and waited. How slow the days were, and at the end of each there came a letter from Edgar full of his wild love for me, which sickened my heart. Two weeks had gone by; Edgar was to come back soon now, and no reply had reached me.

"One evening as I was sitting in my room, the tears trickling down on my breast, the footman came to tell me that a tall, dark gentleman, who refused to give his name, wished to see me. I ran downstairs, and there in the hall stood my husband.

"He took me into his arms, tears and all, and an hour later I escaped with him, and came back to my home. Before I left Scotland I wrote a letter to Edgar, telling him that my husband had come for me, and that I was going home to my people.

"*Yavroum*, can you believe it, but my husband still loved me, and my place in his heart was still empty and waiting for me. He forgave all; for he understood.

"A month had not gone by when Edgar was in Constantinople. He came straight to my husband and accused him of stealing me away from him. It was a very dangerous thing to do, and any other man than my husband would have had him killed and thrown into the Bosphorus. But Ahmet Ali ordered the carriage and told Edgar to come with him and see me in my Stamboul home. There he brought him into the sitting-room and left him with me alone.

"When Edgar saw me he held out his arms for me; but the sight of him filled me only with loathing.

"I can never forget him, never. *Yavroum*, whatever your life may be, be careful with men. If you hurt one of them, and he turns on you his sad eyes, they will follow you through life. Sometimes when you will forget and be happy playing with your baby, that baby will look at you as the man did, and there will be no joy for you. If you ever belong to one man, even though you may think that there is no great love in his heart for you, stay by him, and do no wrong.

"I was full of bitterness that day for Edgar. I accused him of having done me a very great wrong, though, in truth, the wrong was mine. When I told him that I did not love him, that I never had loved him, that it was a silly girl's whim that took me to him, I think he would have killed me if my husband had not stepped in. Then he turned furiously on Ahmet, and would have killed him, I know, had not Ahmet been too quick and too strong for him. He had a white cloth, wet with some chemical, in his hand, and forced this over Edgar's face; and after a terrible struggle he threw him to the floor, and there he presently lay as if dead, though Ahmet said he was only unconscious. Then instead of killing him, my husband had him put on a ship that was going away.

"I did not hear of him again until two

years later, when Ahmet told me that Edgar had been killed, and that his child was under my husband's care. And now, *yavroum*, I come to where I must ask you to help me. Edgar's mother is having search made everywhere for the child; even the Sultan has been approached by the English ambassador. I want you, *yavroum*, when you go back to America, to write a letter to her and tell her that Hope is happy and well; and that, considering that she has Turkish blood in her, we are bringing her up as a noble Osmanli woman should be brought up. Should the child, however, when she grows to be a woman, seem unhappy in Turkey, we will send her back to her in England. But I must teach her now, while she is little, something of the greatness of Allah. Here, *yavroum*, is the address to which to write."

Mechanically I took the piece of paper with the address on it, and stared at my Rossetti lady as she finished her story and made her request.

She was looking at me imploringly.

"You will, *yavroum*, will you not? For if the old duchess makes much fuss, I am afraid I shall lose the child."

"Are you afraid of your husband killing it?" I asked.

The horror in her face showed me that we had got beyond the bounds of possibility.

"Oh, no! only she might have to be sent into Asia Minor, to my husband's mother, and then I should not have the chance to watch over her myself, and to give her back to England, if she should desire it."

"Hanoum, why don't you send her now?" I asked. "She is English through her father, and she is the only child that grandmother has."

My Rossetti lady's face was again nearly as horror-stricken as before.

"Give the child to be brought up among that godless set of people. No! no! I could not do it! Besides, my pasha would never hear of it. He says that the little girl is partly

I, and that he could never give any part of me, no matter how small, to the infidels."

"Do you want me to write under my name or yours?" I asked.

"Neither, *yavroum.* Just any name, and no address. I shall give you a little miniature of the child, and several pictures. Send them to the grandmother, and tell her that once a year pictures and news of the child shall be sent to her, and that little Hope is well and happy."

"How can I say that, since I have not seen the child?" I protested, rather feebly.

"You shall see her to-morrow."

I was not happy in the situation. I had had my fill of romance, to be sure; but I had been dragged into playing a part in it that I did not particularly approve of, although I knew the futility of trying to play any other part than that assigned to me. I looked out of my latticed window upon the Bosphorus, and as I looked the mystery of the East again stole over my senses. I turned my eyes to the woman, slim and graceful, and of a beauty that I could well believe had inspired the love it had in two men of alien races, and my Western prejudices fell from me.

"Dear Hanoum," I said, "I will do what you ask me to do." Then emboldened by the favor I was going to do for her, I asked, as perhaps only in that dark room of another world I could have asked: "Do you love your husband as much as you thought you did?"

She leaned over and took my hand.

"Dear little blossom, you don't know what love is, do you? I love my husband a million times more than I ever did before, though the past can never be undone, and whenever I feel my husband's eyes upon me I shudder at the thought that he may possibly be thinking of that other man. A woman can never belong to two men — never! A woman is a flower, and cannot be touched by two persons without being polluted. The past always comes between, *yavroum;* but out of that sorrow I can be a good mother, a good wife, now when the storm no longer blows, though the trees have fallen, and the wreckage is all around me."

She leaned forward on the divan, held her palms upward, and prayed to her God: —

"O Allah, take care of the living, and forgive the dead!"

It seemed all in keeping with the night and the woman, looking more than ever like the embodiment of a poem, a greater poem now than Rossetti ever wrote. She was the East itself: the mysterious East, with its strange ideas of love, and death, and of religion.

After one of those silences that seem a natural part of an Oriental conversation, my Rossetti lady drew me to her and kissed me, saying: —

"Little crest of the wave, you have helped to give peace to one who has brought storm to life. May the doing of this for me be rewarded with a fund of happiness from which you may draw daily." She rose to her feet as she spoke. "Come, let us go down where you can meet my lord and my children."

They were in the dining-room, and had apparently been awaiting us; for along the wall stood a row of motionless slaves, one hand, in military style, straight down at their sides, the other supporting the dishes that were on their heads.

"This is my husband," said my hostess, putting my hand into that of Ahmet Pasha. "Our American friend."

"We are happy to have you among us, young Hanoum; and this anniversary of our great Pattishah will be doubly celebrated by us hereafter," he said, with simple sincerity.

Ahmet Pasha was a Saracen evidently, not a Turk, and as I looked at him I did not wonder that my Rossetti lady had left the Englishman and come back to him: I only wondered that she had ever left him. In his splendid uniform and his decorations he was an almost ideal hero. I was surprised at his taking dinner with us, but heard later that he always ate with his wife except when there were Turkish women present.

The children were very pretty and healthy looking, and most devoted to their mother. After the meal was over we were taken to the Sultan's palace, where a midnight banquet was served to a thousand pashas and foreign grandees. We women sat with the women of the palace in the gardens, watching the fireworks, and refreshed with sweets and sherbets every five or ten minutes.

Home again, and my Rossetti lady took me to her room and showed me the necklace of red rubies her husband had given her that day, as is customary on public anniversaries, and the neglect of which would have been equivalent to a notice of impending divorce. Next she opened her jewelry box and asked me to choose from it anything that took my fancy, since she wished to give me something. While we were examining the jewels, and when she had begun to let down her hair, Ahmet Pasha sent word to ask if he might come in and join our conversation. The Turks quite often turn night into day when the fancy takes them. We did that night; thus not going to bed until after five o'clock.

As we sat there on the divan, my Rossetti lady had her hair loose on her shoulders, except for a ribbon holding it back from her face. Ahmet Pasha gathered a strand of it in his fingers, and turned to me.

"Did you ever see anything more exquisite in your life?" he asked.

I had to admit that I had never seen anything to equal it.

"Nor is there a woman more charming," he said, his Turkish politeness not permitting him to declare in the presence of another that she was the *most* charming of all.

My Rossetti lady took his hand and kissed it in silence; and I thought I saw, together with love, the gratitude of a woman who has sinned and has been forgiven.

In the forenoon of the next day the Turkish lady came to the house. With her were her slaves and a child. At once I recognized whose child it must be.

I took her on my lap, and spoke to her in English.

"Little girlie, what is your name?"

The child looked at her mother, put her little finger in her mouth, and whispered:—

"I am mother's little Hope. But they call me Salihé Hanoum now."

"Do you like things here?" I asked.

"Yes; and soon I am coming back to live with mother"; and with the words she scrambled down and ran to my Rossetti lady.

This day was the last time I ever saw any of the household of Ahmet Pasha. In a few days I went to Russia, and some six weeks later returned to Constantinople to take the steamer for Naples, where I was to meet the boat for America. The steamer was one of those semi-freight affairs that carry more cargo than passengers, and spent a day or two each at some eight ports before reaching Naples. On the quay, as I was embarking at Constantinople, a young Englishman had been introduced to me by a member of the Greek Legation. We two were the only first-class passengers who made the whole trip to Naples, and naturally we became well acquainted by the time we reached Sicily.

The night that the boat stopped at Palermo we were sitting on deck. It was a warm October night, brilliant with starlight, a night whose witchery plays the mischief with the tongues of people. My Englishman lost the reserve that he might have kept under a northern sky, and began to tell me why he had come to Turkey.

"It was a wild-goose chase," he said, "and I tell you I never wish again to have much to do with your Turkish friends. I was hunting for a child, the child of my cousin; but I might as well have been trying to kidnap the Sultan." And interlarded with "don't you know's" and "fahncy's," he told me the story which two months before, again on a wonderful southern night, gloriously illuminated, a Turkish woman had told to me.

"You see Edgar could not stand it," he concluded. "Two years after she left him he blew his brains out. No one knew the woman was Turkish, except his mother, and now myself. I met her once, and I tell you she was the kind of a woman a man would go mad over. Immediately after Edgar's death the child was stolen, and my aunt was almost prostrated by it. That is why I have been hunting through Turkey for her."

"What makes you think that the child is in Turkey?" I asked, making my voice as steady as I could.

"Oh, the husband sent a letter from Paris, saying that he had taken the child to bring up in the truth faith; but you see we don't know where they are. We don't even know that they live in Constantinople, and Turkey is beastly big when you go on a hunt like mine. All the same, I have an idea that had

I stayed much longer in the capital I should have disappeared, too, and no one would ever have heard of me again, although I had the help of the Embassy."

My eyes were fixed on the lights of Palermo, and on Monte Pelegrino beyond, and I did not speak. Perhaps my English friend thought I was not as much interested in his account as I might have been. If he had only known how interested I was!

I thought of the addressed envelope down in my trunk, and of the miniature and the photographs of an English child. But this was not mine to tell, nor would it have helped him if I had.

The lights of Palermo twinkled cheerily at us across the water; but behind them Monte Pelegrino seemed to loom sardonically, as if it were amused at the tiny struggles of the insects at its feet, who called themselves men.

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